



# LITERACY IN INDIA

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BY

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As an official of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, I wish to make it clear that any opinions expressed here are personal to myself, have not the sanction of the Authority I serve, and are not to be taken as indicating their policy.

—*R. V. Parulekar.*

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DEDICATED

TO

THE LATE

MR. NARAYAN ANANT DESAI  
TOPIWALA

FRIEND AND PATRON

“Primary purpose of mass education is to banish illiteracy from the land. The quality of education is a matter of importance that comes only after illiteracy has been banished.”

—*G. K. Gokhale.*

## PREFACE

The author of this book wrote a pamphlet called—*Mass Education in India*—in 1934. The main burden of his song then was that literacy in India was not progressing satisfactorily because the educational system in existence was sacrificing quantity to quality. Since then, much water has flowed under the bridge; and particularly since the advent of popular Governments in the country, there is not only a keen desire but even intense anxiety to remove the blot of illiteracy from the face of the Motherland. No apology is, therefore, needed if in the following pages an attempt is made to analyse the present position of literacy in India and to examine and discuss the many and varied problems relating to it.

It may well be emphasised here that this work is neither a dirge nor a satire on the Indian educational system. It aims at being constructive, and an attempt has been made throughout to understand the present state of Indian education in the light of the history of administration of education in India and its comparison with that of other nations of the world. Statistics have been freely called into aid; but their limitations have not been ignored. The writer has been at pains to scrutinise and re-examine the data where his conclusions seemed to differ from those which have so far been generally accepted, and it is his hope and belief that whether the conclusions reached are accepted or rejected, credit will be given for freedom from bias in the treatment of the subject. It is possible, of course, that the study of a subject over an extended period of time may create in one prejudices and prepossessions in certain directions leading to over-emphasis. This has been avoided so far as it could be done.

**Bombay,**  
*April, 1939.*





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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTORY

The Indian Nation has already made a certain amount of progress towards self-government through the collective will of its people. It must, therefore, for its very existence make a supreme effort, in the shortest possible time, to wipe out mass illiteracy which will otherwise endanger the very form of Government which the people are trying so hard to develop. Since the advent of the new Provincial Governments, the desire to promote the spread of literacy has become acute; and intense and vigorous efforts are certain to be made by these Governments to achieve the goal. At the threshold of this new era, therefore, it is worthwhile to take a stock of our past and present efforts to promote literacy and examine how far they have succeeded.

The making of a poor nation of more than 350 million souls literate is, no doubt, a colossal task in itself. Apart from this inherent difficulty, there are others which are impeding progress. They are: (1) certain prejudices and obsessions and (2) a consequent feeling of despondency. The obsessions are mainly due to India's political dependence on Great Britain and the desire arising out of that to imitate British ideals, methods and practices, irrespective of the soil out of which they grew and the circumstances in which they could prosper. This has further led to a sort of conservatism arising out of the official unwillingness to test the current methods and practices in the light of the experience of other countries with economic and social environments similar to those of India.

This obsession has naturally brought despondency in its wake. For it requires no genius, either mathematical or financial, to prove that with her present economic resources and on the basis of the present methods and practices, to universalise education in India is well nigh impossible.

Another cause of the present gloom is traceable to the exaggerated emphasis that is being laid on certain not unavoidable aspects of our educational system, the so-called 'wastage' and 'stagnation'. Much is again made of the alleged lapse into illiteracy of those who leave schools after attaining literacy. These and other similar ideas have gone deep into the minds of some officials of the Educational Departments who have drawn such gloomy pictures of the future prospects of Indian Education that advocates are not wanting who say that all efforts at educational expansion should be stopped forthwith until these (so called) evils are eradicated.

India has thus to start a nation-wide campaign for achieving mass literacy under auspices which are hardly encouraging. She has, therefore, to proceed with her efforts in the face of indifference, if not active opposition, of those who are wedded to tradition and impatient of advice.

The purpose of this book is to give a message of hope to those who will have the privilege of guiding the destinies of future India, that bad as our educational system has been, it has not been so bad as it is made out to be. The situation is hopeful if only we cease to be guided by the ideals of an advanced nation like England and adopt measures and practices which are more suited to the conditions of our people and the financial resources of our country. This book, therefore, devotes some pages to a critical examination of the available statistical and other data relating to mass education not only of this country, but of other countries as well. In this connection, attention may be specifically drawn to the educational system in the Dutch East Indies. One is impressed not merely with the success of that system, but more particularly by the outlook of those who devised it and have been working it. A brief account of it is given in this book in a separate Note. (*Vide Appendix A.*)

The main basis of the system of mass education in the Dutch East Indies is the three-class school, and nearly 85 per cent. of the children receiving elementary education

are in these three-class schools. These schools have been successful in promoting literacy on an adequate scale and the administration has nothing but praise for them. It has been shown in this book (Chapter III) that it is the product of the third year class in India that adds to the number of literates according to the Census standard of literacy. But the official prejudice against the system is so great in India that the three-class schools, which abound in the Provinces of Bengal, United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa, are condemned wholesale by the administrations of these Provinces as institutions which make no contribution whatever towards the literacy of these Provinces, a statement which cannot stand critical examination in the light of the Census data. The social and economic background of the Dutch East Indies and of these three Indian Provinces being not very dissimilar, the only reason for wide divergence in the views can be found in the outlook of those who are charged with the administration of education in these two countries.

The view prevailing in India today is that no child can be literate unless he completes the 4th year class of the primary school. In an attempt to find out the validity of this view, an independent statistical inquiry was undertaken which showed that, as in the Dutch East Indies, in India also a child acquires Census literacy if he is able to complete the 3rd year class of a primary school and that he retains it in his after-school life. (*Vide* Chapter V.) The Indian official view about the minimum four-class system necessary for acquiring literacy has tended to create exaggerated notions of the wastage problem and has been mainly responsible for the undue pessimism about India's capacity to finance schemes of universal primary education.

Another problem which has been largely responsible for the growing despondency about the future of mass education in India is the fear of alleged relapse into illiteracy. Wastage relates to children who leave school before attaining literacy; while relapse relates to those who lose literacy after acquiring it at school. These two factors are quite independent of each other; and yet they are

invariably mixed up, making the picture look darker and creating a confusion which has led many to denounce the Indian system in terms which it does not deserve.

The writer has tried to prove that a minimum course of three years of schooling is sufficient to give the Indian pupil literacy as assessed by the Census standard; and for proof, the writer has relied on statistical data collected by Government. His conclusion is supported not only by the practice followed in the Dutch East Indies, but also in the French Indo-China. The literacy statistics of Burma (*vide* p. 39) again point to the same conclusion, *viz.*, that schools with a course shorter than one of four years are very useful to a country whose immediate aim is the liquidation of mass illiteracy. The discouragement of private indigenous schools which imparted such small-range education has been fatal to this ideal, whatever its other achievements may have been. Literacy in India as judged by the Census standard will mainly depend upon the number of pupils who are able to complete the 3rd year class; those who complete the 4th, 5th or a higher class may be better educated, but their number has no relation to the figure of new literates recorded in the Census Reports. Therefore in devising any schemes for the promotion of literacy in India this important fact should never be lost sight of.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERACY AND ITS PROGRESS

The Indian Census definition of 'literacy' is the ability to write a letter to a friend and to read the answer to it.<sup>1</sup> This definition was first adopted at the Census of 1911. In 1901 the population was divided into two classes, 'Literate' and 'Illiterate'. In that Census no orders as to the degree of proficiency in reading and writing required to satisfy the test of literacy were issued by the Government of India, but the instruction to the enumerators was: "Enter in this column against all persons of whatever age, whether they can or cannot both read and write any language".<sup>2</sup> In some provinces a local test was prescribed. For instance, in the Central Provinces the test laid down was the passing of the Upper Primary School Examination or an equivalent qualification. In Madras those only were to be recorded as literate who were able to write a letter to a friend and read his reply. Elsewhere the test seems to have differed, not only from province to province, but also from district to district. In some parts, persons were entered as literate "who could do little more than write their own name and spell out a few printed words".<sup>3</sup>

Prior to 1901, the population was divided in respect of 'education' into three categories, viz., 'Learning', 'Literate' and 'Illiterate'. All those who were under instruction, either at home or at school or college, were entered as 'Learning'; 'Literates' were those who were able both to read and write any language, but who were not under instruction; while 'Illiterates' were those who were neither under instruction nor knew how to read and write.

From 1911 onwards the literacy statistics are strictly comparable. There is, however, one thing to be noted. In

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<sup>1</sup> Census of India, 1921, Vol. I, Part I, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Census of India, 1911, Vol. I, Part I, p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the Census Report of 1921, the chapter relating to literacy was entitled 'Literacy'; while in previous years, it was called 'Education'—"a title which might comprehend any range of literary ability from the scrawl of a signature on a cheque to the composition of a political leading article".<sup>1</sup> It may be here stated that the Census authorities have laid down that literates under the age of 5 should not be reckoned as such.

In enumerating literates for Census purposes, no actual test is applied. The enumerator merely asks the question: "Can you read and write a letter?" If the answer to the question is in the affirmative, he is expected to record the person as 'Literate'. Such are his instructions. The question as to what language a person is literate in is not pertinent. Any language will do. It is customary in India to make a special enumeration of literates in English at the time of the Census and the figures are given as 'Literacy in English'.

The Census definition of 'literacy' in India is the ability to read and write a *letter*. A person able to read only but not able to write is not shown as 'Literate' in the Census Reports. The number of those who can decipher the pages of a printed book with more or less difficulty is no doubt much larger.

The question as to how far the literacy statistics recorded at the decennial Census are reliable may now be considered. An answer to it is supplied by the authors of some of the Census Reports themselves.

The author of Census Report (India), 1921, observes as follows: "It is not easy to compute the degree of accuracy which the statistics represent . . . . . So far as the human equation is concerned ambition on the part of the public to be recorded as literate was probably met by the exclusiveness on the part of the educated enumerator, who had the last word in the matter. In the North-West

<sup>1</sup> Census of India, 1921, Vol. I, Part I, p. 175.

Frontier Province, where the sword is more respected than the pen, there is said to have been some reluctance on the part of the tribesmen to confess to so unmanly a quality as literacy, while there seems in various provinces to have been an inclination for the Census staff to interpret the simple and practical census criterion in the less elastic terms of a school standard, and to allow literacy only to those who had passed the fourth primary course. .... but on the whole there is a consensus of opinion that the simple criterion laid down was easily understood and sensibly interpreted".<sup>1</sup>

The author of the Burma Census Report, 1931, says: "The instructions for filling in the literacy columns of the enumeration schedule were not difficult to understand and there is no reason to believe that there was any deliberate misrepresentation. In many cases, particularly in rural areas, the persons enumerated would be personally known to the enumerators. It is probable therefore that the enumeration record represents the facts fairly accurately".<sup>2</sup>

The author of the Bengal Census Report, 1931, observes: "Amongst the total population there is a considerable number whose education extends only as far as ability to sign their name and since some degree of pride generally accompanies this accomplishment, there is also a danger that persons possessing it will return themselves as literate. During enumeration proceedings emphasis was laid on this point and directions were circulated that such persons were not to be entered as literate. In any case, however, the tendency exists in equal strength at every enumeration and is not likely on the present occasion to have varied greatly in its intensity, though it is of course possible to hope that the elimination of such persons has been more successfully effected and the accuracy of the returns increased on the present occasion. It is not likely

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Part I, p. 150.



that persons actually illiterate will to any extent claim literacy out of a feeling of shame at their lack of education".<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, therefore, according to responsible authorities competent to pronounce views on the accuracy of the Census literacy figures, it may be safely assumed that the figures of literacy as revealed in the Census Reports are fairly reliable.

It would be of interest to know the definition of 'literacy' obtaining in countries outside India. Detailed information on this point is contained in a Bulletin (No. 4) published by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, U. S. A.<sup>2</sup> It gives the tests or standards of 'illiteracy' as defined by each country for enumerating illiterates. From this could be inferred what each country means by 'literacy' for Census purposes. The following are some of the definitions of 'illiteracy' extant in some countries of the world: (1) inability to read; (2) inability to write; (3) inability to read *and* write; and (4) inability to read and write a letter.

The first definition is adopted by the following countries: Canada, Italy, Poland, Chile, and the Philippine Islands; the second definition obtains in the United States of America and some of the islands and tracts under her influence; the third is to be found in many important countries of the world such as Australia, New Zealand, Union of South Africa, Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Sweden, Hungary, Spain, Mexico, U.S.S.R., Portugal, the Dutch East Indies and Egypt. The only countries which prescribe the test of inability to read *and* write a *letter* are: India (including Burma), Ceylon and the British Malaya—all under the control of the British. Nowhere else is this test applied.

Writing about India, the Bulletin observes: "As between the illiteracy rates published for the United States and

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<sup>1</sup> Part I, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> Illiteracy in the Several Countries of the World (1929).

those for India, the latter are undoubtedly more reliable. The definition of literacy in India sets a higher standard and in its very nature requires a more careful application".<sup>1</sup>

Even as far back as 1901, the ~~standard~~ standard of attainment for literacy in India was somewhat higher compared to that in some other parts of the British Empire. This can be seen from the following statement appearing in the Census of the British Empire, 1901: "The very low proportion of persons in the Indian Empire returned as able to read and write, although doubtless mainly due to a real lack of education, is also to a slight extent due to somewhat higher standard that was required there as compared with some other parts of the Empire".<sup>2</sup>

According to the figures supplied in the Bulletin on 'Illiteracy' referred to above, among the several parts of the British Empire for which percentages of illiteracy are given therein, India shows the highest percentage. The only part of the Empire that comes nearer to India is that tract of South Africa which is inhabited by the Bantus. The Indian figure is 90.5 (for ages above 10)<sup>3</sup> and the Bantu figure stands at 90.3 (all ages). If the figures are reduced to a common basis, the Bantu figure of illiteracy will be substantially lower than the one for India.

The Fourteenth Census of U. S. A. (1920), Vol. II, Population, gives not only the definition of 'illiteracy' as laid down for the Census, but it makes a significant observation as to the meaning of the figures and their value to the nation: "Illiteracy, as defined by the Census Bureau, signifies inability to write in any language, regardless of ability to read . . . . . In general, the illiterate population as shown by the Census figures should be understood as comprising only those persons who have had no education whatever. Thus the statistics do not show directly or

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> p. lv.

<sup>3</sup> The Bulletin, p. 36.

definitely the proportion of population which may be termed illiterate when the word is used to imply lack of ability to read and write with a reasonable degree of facility; but they do afford a fairly reliable measure of the effect of the improvement in the educational opportunities from decade to decade".<sup>1</sup>

The Bulletin on 'Illiteracy' referred to above makes the following interesting observations on the value of statistics of illiteracy: "Illiteracy statistics form one of the several indices used in the science of demography to measure roughly the degree of a people's culture. They indicate to a considerable extent the effectiveness of its school system, the pride which the race in question takes in its language and literature, and its determination to open to all its citizenry the medium of written communication. They reflect the national attitude towards the education of women, indigenous peoples, and minority groups; the enforcement of compulsory education laws; and the general progress of educational policies. They are of use to the administrator in formulating policies of government. They are in a definite sense an indication of a country's financial and economic status. They are a valuable supplement to the more detailed and more frequently gathered statistics of education published annually or biennially by most countries".<sup>2</sup>

Whether India should adopt a Census definition of 'literacy' which is stricter than what obtains in most of the countries of the world is a question for India to decide. However, when India is compared with other nations of the world from the point of view of literacy and its progress from decade to decade, the fact that the Indian definition is far stricter should not be lost sight of.

The first systematic Population Census of India was taken in 1881 and this was followed subsequently by a

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<sup>1</sup> p. 1145.

<sup>2</sup> p. 1.

regular decennial enumeration. Although as already stated the Census Literacy Statistics after 1911 cannot strictly be compared with those for previous years, a rough comparison could certainly be made. The following statement will show the rate of progress of literacy in India:<sup>1</sup>

Year	Percentage of Literacy
1881	3.5
1891	4.6
1901	5.3
1911	5.9
1921	7.3
1931	8.0

It will be seen that literacy in India rose in the 50 years between 1881 and 1931 from 3.5 to 8.0 per cent., recording roughly a rise of 1 per cent. per decade. That the rate of progress of literacy is very slow is a fact which cannot be challenged. It is needless to say that if we allow ourselves to go ahead at the same pace or even at a somewhat accelerated one, years will elapse before India can claim a fairly satisfactory percentage of literacy.

During the last 100 years, the British have given to India a system of education comprising all stages from the Primary to the University. The system is comprehensive enough and India has, in a way, reaped its benefits. From the very beginning, however, the system has been based on ideals and practices foreign to the genius of the Indian people. Throughout these hundred years or till about a decade or two ago, the system was never organically related to the needs of the Indian masses or, in other words, to the goal of securing a reasonable share of education to the great bulk of the Indian people. The policy dominating the system for over three quarters of a century was to educate the 'classes' and it was believed that when the

<sup>1</sup> The figures are for all persons of all ages and they relate to the whole of the Indian Empire (including Burma).

'classes' were educated they would carry down the 'culture' to the 'masses' by the natural process of 'filtration'. The 'filtration theory' now stands exploded. Left to themselves the classes are not disposed to impart their knowledge and culture to the masses. This was realised long ago in England and other countries, and as a result the states undertook the task of educating the masses. Compulsory education laws were enacted and enforced, and the states concerned spent money freely and liberally over schemes of mass education. The process was so quick and so effective that within a generation the masses were educated to the prescribed minimum standard of education. Then began the process of assimilation and consolidation and the prescription of higher standards of minimum education for the masses.

In India, however, till about the beginning of the second decade of the present century, the idea of mass education was never before the mind of the Government. The credit of first launching the idea of mass education in India goes to the late Mr. G. K. Gokhale who, in his striking speeches in the then Central Legislative Council in the years 1910-1911, roused the conscience of the Government and the people to the need of a wide campaign of mass education and consequent promotion of mass literacy. Although his efforts were not immediately rewarded, they were not without their effect. By 1920 or thereabout, the various Indian Provinces passed or were preparing to enact laws of compulsory education with a view to accelerating the pace of mass education. At present there is hardly a province in India which has not put on its Statute Book some kind of measure for compulsory education. And yet we are practically where we were so far as mass literacy is concerned. The percentage of literacy in India in 1921 was about 7; in 1931 it was 8.

Many and varied are the causes which are responsible for this extremely sad state of mass education as revealed by the very low percentage of literacy. Of them financial difficulty is, no doubt, the most formidable one. More literates means more children in schools which in its turn requires more money to be spent on them. It is

not, however, proposed to discuss here this financial aspect of the question. It will serve no useful purpose to present schemes and make suggestions involving vast additional expenditure which the provincial governments are not in a position to undertake at least in the near future. Besides, the anxiety of these governments to spend as much more on education as possible, is so keen that they hardly require to be told to be more liberal in educational expenditure.

It is, however, intended to analyse critically the present internal organisation of the Primary School System with a view to ascertaining its defects which prevent the system from yielding a larger output of literates.

To understand the situation correctly it is necessary to ascertain the number of new literates added to the population during the decade 1921-31. This number will represent the output of literates from the primary schools during the decade. For it is well known that there are hardly any extra-school agencies which produce literates in India; and if there be some, their contribution is insignificant. The next step will be to ascertain what section of pupils attending the primary schools during the decade covers this number of new literates added to the population during that decade. The system of primary education in India throughout the provinces is, on the whole, more or less uniform in its internal organisation. This being so, it would be reasonably expected that the Census literacy standard would be attained by those pupils who could attend a minimum course culminating in the completion of a particular class of the primary school course.

From the Annual Educational Reports for British India as well as for the Provinces, it is possible to find out the number of pupils on the rolls of each of the primary classes during the decade. A certain proportion of this number will represent pupils who may be taken to have completed the course of that particular class. If the number of pupils completing the course of a particular

primary class during the decade is found to be approximately equal to the number of new literates added to the population during the decade, then it can be reasonably assumed that the completion of that particular class is the minimum requirement for attaining literacy as judged by the Census standard.

If a numerical measure of the success of the primary schools in point of their capacity to produce new literates is thus obtained, it would be possible to find out why more pupils do not reach that stage and what measures it would be necessary to adopt to make them reach that stage, so that the rate of progress of literacy may be accelerated.

## CHAPTER III

### SCHOOLS AND LITERACY: BRITISH INDIA

One important fact must be taken into account in the investigation of the correlation between the literacy statistics of the Census and the Educational statistics of British India, namely, that till recently, Burma formed a part of British India. It should be noted, however, that Burma's literacy problem is somewhat peculiar. Burma led all the Provinces of India in literacy. Burma's percentage of literacy in 1931 was 31.3, while that of British India was only 8.2. Again, primary schools in Burma conducted under the Government system of education contribute only a small proportion of the literates produced in Burma, the monastic schools being the main agencies for their production.

Now that Burma has been separated from British India, the 1941 Census literacy statistics of British India will exclude those of Burma. It would, therefore, be of interest to examine the earlier Census statistics for British India (excluding Burma).

		Population (in lakhs)		
		1911	1921	1931
1. British India (including Burma) ...		2443	2470	2715
2. Burma ...		121	132	147
3. British India (excluding Burma) ...		2322	2338	2568



		Literates (in lakhs)		
		1911	1921	1931
1. British India (including Burma) ...		153	185	225
2. Burma ...		27	37	46
3. British India (excluding Burma) ...		126	148	179
		Percentage of Literacy (all ages)		
		1911	1921	1931
1. British India (including Burma) ...		6.2	7.6	8.2
2. Burma ...		22.3	28.0	31.3
3. British India (excluding Burma) ...		5.4	6.3	6.9

It will be seen from the above table that in 1931, British India (excluding Burma) had 6.9 per cent. literacy, although the inclusion of Burma raised the percentage to 8.2. With Burma, British India had 6.9 per cent. literacy in about 1915; without Burma that figure was reached in 1931. India had thus an apparent advantage of about 15 years' progress simply because Burma happened to be linked with it in point of literacy statistics.

Burma thus holds a peculiar position in literacy. In trying to correlate Census and Educational figures for British India so far as literacy is concerned, Burma must be excluded, in order to eliminate the number of literates produced by the extra-departmental agencies which Burma has in great numbers in its monastic schools.

It is necessary to find out how many new literates were added during the decade 1921-31, in British India (excluding Burma). There were in 1921 in British India (excluding Burma) 148 lakhs of literate persons of all

ages. Their number rose in 1931 to 179 lakhs. Thus, there was an increase of 31 lakhs of literates during the decade. But this number is the net increase. The gross increase must be far greater. From the 148 lakhs of literates of 1921, some must have died during the decade. The death-rate among literates of all ages comes to about 23 per cent. during a period of ten years.<sup>1</sup> Out of 148 lakhs of literates recorded in 1921, 23 per cent., *i.e.*, about 34 lakhs, must have died, their places being taken up by the new literates produced during the decade. The output of new literates during the decade must, therefore, have been 65 (31+34) lakhs. During the ten years of the decade 1921-31, the actual number of new literates produced must have been greater than 65 lakhs, to allow for deaths among them. Taking 5 per cent.<sup>2</sup> as the death-rate during a decade among the new literates, and applying that rate to the number (65 lakhs), the actual number of new literates produced during the decade 1921-31 would be about 68 lakhs.<sup>3</sup>

It thus appears that during the decade 1921-31, British India proper produced about 68 lakhs of new literates. As there were hardly any extra-school agencies producing literates, it may be assumed that almost all of the 68 lakhs of new literates were the product of the primary schools.

It is seen that out of the 68 lakhs of new literates produced during the decade 1921-31, about 34 lakhs had to fill up the gaps caused by deaths among the literates of 1921 and about 3 lakhs of the new literates died during the decade. Thus death alone claimed 37 lakhs. Moreover, owing to the natural growth of the population during the decade which is not less than 10 per cent., about 15 lakhs of the new literates were required to keep up in 1931 the literacy percentage of 1921. Thus 52 out of 68 lakhs of new literates, or nearly 76 per cent. of them, were as good as lost, so far as the actual percentage increase of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Appendix B, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> In some of the calculations made hitherto to correlate Census with Educational statistics, the death-rate factor is either neglected or not properly accounted for (*vide* Appendix C).

		Literates (in lakhs)		
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Burma thus holds a peculiar position in literacy. In trying to correlate Census and Educational figures for British India so far as literacy is concerned, Burma must be excluded, in order to eliminate the number of literates produced by the extra-departmental agencies which Burma has in great numbers in its monastic schools.

It is necessary to find out how many new literates were added during the decade 1921-31, in British India (excluding Burma). There were in 1921 in British India (excluding Burma) 148 lakhs of literate persons of all

ages. Their number rose in 1931 to 179 lakhs. Thus, there was an increase of 31 lakhs of literates during the decade. But this number is the net increase. The gross increase must be far greater. From the 148 lakhs of literates of 1921, some must have died during the decade. The death-rate among literates of all ages comes to about 23 per cent. during a period of ten years.<sup>1</sup> Out of 148 lakhs of literates recorded in 1921, 23 per cent., i.e., about 34 lakhs, must have died, their places being taken up by the new literates produced during the decade. The output of new literates during the decade must, therefore, have been 65 (31+34) lakhs. During the ten years of the decade 1921-31, the actual number of new literates produced must have been greater than 65 lakhs, to allow for deaths among them. Taking 5 per cent.<sup>2</sup> as the death-rate during a decade among the new literates, and applying that rate to the number (65 lakhs), the actual number of new literates produced during the decade 1921-31 would be about 68 lakhs.<sup>3</sup>

It thus appears that during the decade 1921-31, British India proper produced about 68 lakhs of new literates. As there were hardly any extra-school agencies producing literates, it may be assumed that almost all of the 68 lakhs of new literates were the product of the primary schools.

It is seen that out of the 68 lakhs of new literates produced during the decade 1921-31, about 34 lakhs had to fill up the gaps caused by deaths among the literates of 1921 and about 3 lakhs of the new literates died during the decade. Thus death alone claimed 37 lakhs. Moreover, owing to the natural growth of the population during the decade which is not less than 10 per cent., about 15 lakhs of the new literates were required to keep up in 1931 the literacy percentage of 1921. Thus 52 out of 68 lakhs of new literates, or nearly 76 per cent. of them, were as good as lost, so far as the actual percentage increase of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Appendix B, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> In some of the calculations made hitherto to correlate Census with Educational statistics, the death-rate factor is either neglected or not properly accounted for (*vide* Appendix C).

literate was concerned, owing to the very high death and birth rates prevailing in this country.

In countries like England and others where the birth and death rates are lower, the corresponding percentage of new literates required to meet the deficiencies due to deaths and births is comparatively smaller than that in India. The peculiar circumstance of our country over which the educational system has no control, and whereby a very large number of new literates is required merely to fill up the gaps, is responsible, not to a small extent, for the slow growth of literacy from decade to decade, apart from other causes which may be within the control of the educational administration.

The question of literacy statistics presented in the Census Reports has been dealt with. Now the Educational Reports may be scanned and conclusions about literacy statistics deducible from them be presented.

It is possible to get from the Educational Reports—both for India and for the Provinces—the number of pupils who were on the rolls of a particular class or standard of the primary schools at the end of each educational year, *i.e.*, on March 31st. If it is found that the number of pupils who have completed a particular class or standard (calculating backwards from higher to lower classes) during the ten years 1922-31, comes to about 68 lakhs which, as it is seen, must have been the total number of new literates produced during the decade to give us the actual number of literates recorded in the 1931 Census, it may reasonably be assumed that the completion of that particular class or standard gives literacy as laid down in the Census definition.

Various opinions are expressed regarding the class, the completion of which gives literacy, as defined for Census purposes. Some hold that the completion of the 5th year class of a primary course gives literacy. Others, and their number is large, consider that the completion of the 4th year class gives literacy; while a few are of the opinion that the completion of the 3rd year course gives literacy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Appendix C, p. 176.

From the Educational Reports it is possible to ascertain the number of pupils on the rolls of each of the primary school classes during each year and the total number for that class in a decade. But this total number represents the gross figure of pupils whose names were on rolls at the end of each official school year, *i.e.*, on the 31st of March. It is well known that owing to retardation or stagnation, a good many pupils have to repeat attendance in a class for a year or more. The names of such pupils will be found two or three years in succession in the same class and thus the total number of pupils found to be on the rolls of a class during a decade would include 'repeaters'. The total number is, therefore, the gross number and it is only by eliminating the 'repeaters' that it is possible to get the net number of pupils who have been on the rolls in a particular class for one year only. This number is, therefore, the proper number of individual pupils which can be taken for finding out a correlation between Census and Educational statistics. This important factor of 'repeaters' does not seem to have been considered in some of the calculations that have been made for correlating the Census and Educational statistics.<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy to ascertain the proportion of 'repeaters' in the total number of pupils on rolls of a particular class during the period of ten years, because the Educational Reports for the years 1922-31 for British India do not contain this information.

It is, however, possible to get an approximate number of pupils who are promoted from a particular class to a higher class in each of the ten years of the decade. This number of promoted pupils will obviously exclude the 'repeaters'; for the name of a pupil who is once promoted is never repeated on the roll of the class from which he is promoted to the next higher class. Again, the number of promoted pupils is approximately equal to the number of pupils who have completed successfully the course of that class. But even this number of promoted pupils for the whole of British India or for all the Provinces

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Appendix C.

cannot be obtained directly, because such figures are not available. The only Educational Reports which give this information are the Annual Reports of the D. P. I., Bombay. And thus the only way by which to arrive at the number of promoted pupils from a particular class is to find out the percentage of promoted pupils in the Bombay schools and then to apply it to the figures for British India.

This may not be the best method; but it is the only method possible. Bombay is considered to have a good system of primary education compared to most other Provinces, especially in its high percentage of pupils going up from class to class. Hence the application of the Bombay percentages of promoted pupils will not lead to over-estimates.

In order to ascertain the number of literates sent out by schools during the inter-censal period (1921 to 1931), let it be assumed that the literates produced by schools in 1921 were counted in the Census of that year. The first year for counting new literates will, therefore, be 1922. Just as in 1921, so in 1931 also, the literates produced in that year (1931) are assumed to have been counted in 1931 Census. On these assumptions the ten years from 1922 to 1931 are taken for the purposes of the following calculations based on Bombay figures<sup>1</sup>.

Class	Total number of pupils on roll, 1922-31 (000)	Total number of pupils promoted, 1922-31 (000)
2nd Year Class (called I Std.)	1716	1017 (59%)
3rd Year Class (called II Std.)	1460	831 (57%)
4th Year Class (called III Std.)	1148	666 (58%)
5th Year Class (called IV Std.)	922	478 (52%)

<sup>1</sup> Vide Appendix D (ii).

In the above statement it is seen that the percentage of pupils promoted from the 4th year to the 5th year class is 58. This may now be applied to the British Indian figures (excluding Burma). In the British Indian Provinces (excluding Burma) there were, in the period 1922-31, 73,28,000 pupils on roll in the 4th year class. On the above basis, the number of promoted pupils comes to 42,50,000.

Thus, if the completion of the 4th year class was necessary for the acquisition of Census literacy, there would have been only 43 lakhs of new literates produced by the schools during the decade. It is well known that there were hardly any other agencies than schools which could produce literates. And yet, as has already been shown, the Census figures postulate the number of new literates to be about 68 lakhs. The divergence between the two figures is so great that the assumption, *viz.*, that the completion of the 4th year class is necessary for the acquisition of literacy, is not justified by the Census figures.

If no correlation is established by taking the figures of the 4th year class, there is no need to consider the figures of the 5th year class at all. However, for the sake of confirmation of this statement, it may be stated that in the British India (excluding Burma) there were on the rolls of the 5th year class 41,57,000 pupils. Assuming that there were no 'repeaters' at all and that every pupil who was on the roll of the 5th year class became literate, it is found that this number (41,57,000) is far below 68 lakhs given by the Census figures. We need not, therefore, consider at all the suggestion that the completion of the 5th year class is necessary for the acquisition of literacy.

One has, therefore, to go below the 4th year class and take the figures of the 3rd year class for finding out whether any correlation exists between the Census and the Educational figures of literacy.

It is seen from the statement given above that in Bombay, during the decade 1922 to 1931, 57 per cent. of



the total number of the pupils in the 3rd year class were found fit for promotion to the 4th year class. The total number of pupils in the 3rd year class in schools in British India (excluding Burma) was 1,08,69,000, 57 per cent. of this number comes to about 62 lakhs. It has already been seen that the Census figures show a total output of 68 lakhs of new literates during the decade 1922-1931. The figures are so close that it may be safely stated that there exists a very close correlation between the Census and the Educational figures, if it is assumed that the completion of the 3rd year class gives literacy according to the Census standard.

To make sure of the above assumption, it would be desirable to examine similarly the figures for the 2nd year class. In British India (excluding Burma) there were about 150 lakhs of pupils on the rolls of the 2nd year class during the years 1922 to 1931. Applying the Bombay percentage of promoted pupils which is 59, it is found that out of the 150 lakhs of pupils, 89 lakhs were promoted during the decade. This number (89 lakhs) is far greater than the number of new literates (68 lakhs) yielded by the Census figures, and hence it is not necessary to go below the 3rd year class for determining the class that gives literacy as required by the Census standard.

The following table gives a summary of the above discussion:

**British India (excluding Burma)**  
(in lakhs)

Class	Pupils on roll during the decade 1922-31	Pupils promoted	Number of new literates yielded by the Census figures
5th year	42	22	68
4th year	73	43	
3rd year	109	62	
2nd year	150	89	

A glance at the above table shows that the only figure of promoted pupils which is nearest to the figure of new literates deduced from the Census statistics is the one (62 lakhs) representing pupils who had completed the 3rd year class. Other assumptions, *viz.*, the completion of the 5th year class or the 4th year class being necessary for the acquisition of Census literacy, are not borne out by the above investigation.

The method adopted above is on the lines of those adopted by other writers for correlating the Literacy and Educational statistics. The calculations are only indicative. They need not be taken to interpret the situation too literally. They indicate that the Census literacy is attained not only by persons who have completed the 4th and 5th year classes, but also by a large number of those who have not gone up beyond the 3rd year class in schools. This will be clear from the fact that in the above calculations the number of persons who have completed the 3rd year class but not the 4th year class is more or less the same as that required to make up the Census figure of new literates in addition to that of persons who have completed the 4th year class. It may, therefore, be reasonably assumed that the completion of the 3rd year class is the minimum necessary for the acquisition of literacy as required by the Census standard.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOLS AND LITERACY: THE PROVINCES

In the preceding chapter it has been shown that in British India as a whole the Census standard of literacy is acquired by a pupil if he is able to complete the course of the third year primary class. The calculations made were based mainly on the percentages of pupils promoted to pupils 'on roll'. The systems of Primary Education in the various Indian Provinces differ from one another in certain respects. The number of classes in primary schools and the length of the primary course vary from Province to Province. The following table shows the number of classes in primary schools in different Provinces during the decade 1922-31<sup>1</sup>:

**Number of Classes in Primary Schools by Provinces**

	Lower Elementary Schools	Higher Elementary Schools
Madras	5	8 (5 + 3)
Bombay	5*	8 (5 + 3)
Bengal	3*	5 (3 + 2)
U. P.	3*	5 (3 + 2)
B. & O.	3	5 (3 + 2)
Punjab	...	4
C. P.	...	4
Assam	2	4 (2 + 2)
Burma	2*	4 (2 + 2)

<sup>1</sup> Hartog Committee Report, p. 36.

\* In these Provinces the lowest class is styled as 'Infants' and the remaining classes as I, II, etc.

The table shows that Bombay and Madras have a continuous minimum primary course of five years. The length of such a course in Bengal, U. P. and B. & O. is the same ; but these three Provinces have also a lower stage of three years. In these Provinces there are several primary schools which teach only the first three years' course. The difference between Bombay and Madras on the one hand, and Bengal, U. P. and B. & O. on the other, is that the former Provinces have one continuous stage of five years, and if there is only one teacher in a primary school, he will have usually to teach five classes; while in the latter Provinces, a teacher in a one-teacher primary school has, in most cases, to teach three classes only. There is also another type of school where over and above the course for three years there is an additional course of two years. In the Punjab and C. P. the primary course is a continuous one of four years and if there is a single teacher in charge of a school he has usually to teach four classes. In the C. P. it appears that a one-teacher school has three classes also. Like Bombay and Madras, these two Provinces had, some years ago, a continuous course of five years; but they changed it into a four years' continuous course. In the case of Assam and Burma, the four-year primary course is again divided into two stages of two years each, but details regarding the division are not easily available.

These differences in the structure of the primary course of instruction have, no doubt, influenced the progress of literacy attained by each Province. It would be desirable to take into account these differences in establishing a correlation between the Educational and Census statistics of literacy in the case of each Province taken separately.

A somewhat detailed enquiry into the correlation between the Census and Educational statistics in various Provinces may now be made in the light of figures given in Statements A, B and C.

**STATEMENT A**  
**Showing the number (in thousands) of new literates produced during the decade 1921 to 1931.**

Province (1)	Literates in 1921 (2)	Literates in 1931 (3)	Increase in literates (Cols. 3-2) (4)	Deaths among literates in 1921 at 23 per cent. for the decade (5)	New literates produced in the decade and living in 1931 (Cols. 4+5) (6)	New literates produced during the decade including those living in 1931 and those who died during the decade. Death rate 5 per cent. (7)
Madras	3622	4319	697	833	1530	1611
Bombay	1646	2003	357	379	736	775
Bengal	4255	4694	439	979	1418	1493
U. P.	1689	2260	571	388	959	1009
B. & O.	1586	1704	118	365	483	508
C. P.	633	868	235	146	381	401
Punjab	833	1248	415	192	607	639

## STATEMENT B

Showing the number (*in thousands*) of promoted pupils during the decade 1921 to 1931 from the (1) 3rd year class and (2) 4th year class.

Province (1)	From 3rd Year Class		From 4th Year Class	
	Pupils on roll from 1922 to 1931 (2)	Pupils promoted to the higher class at 57% of Col. 2 (3)	Pupils on roll from 1922 to 1931 (4)	Pupils promoted to the higher class at 58% of Col. 4 (5)
Madras	2943	1678	2225	1291
Bombay	1460	832	1148	666
Bengal	2274	1296	1063	617
U. P.	1354	772	980	568
B. & O.	1155	658	578	335
C. P.	594	339	499	289
Punjab	986	562	774	449

## STATEMENT C

### Giving the summary of Statements A and B (*in thousands*)

Province	New literates produced during the decade 1921-31 (Census figures)	New literates produced if 3rd year class gives literacy (1921-31)	New literates produced if 4th year class gives literacy (1921-1931)
Madras	1611	1678	1291
Bombay	775	832	666
Bengal	1493	1296	617
U. P.	1009	772	568
B. & O.	508	658	335
C. P.	401	339	289
Punjab	639	562	449

**Statement A.**—Shows the number of new literates produced in each Province during the decade 1921-31, on the assumption that 23% of the old literates die during the decade and a further 5% of the new literates die during the same period.

**Statement B.**—Shows the number of new literates produced by schools during the ten years 1922-31, in each Province : (1) on the assumption that the completion of the 3rd year class gives literacy and (2) on the assumption that completion of the 4th year class gives literacy. In determining the number fit for promotion to a higher class, the percentages adopted are 57 and 58 respectively, on the analogy of the figures calculated for Bombay.

**Statement C.**—Shows in a comparative form the results of Statements A and B.

#### BOMBAY.

It is seen from Statement C that, taking the completion of the 4th year class as necessary for the acquisition of Census literacy, only 6,66,000 persons would have attained literacy. In order to account for the difference of 1,09,000 (7,75,000 — 6,66,000) between the new literates given by the Census figures and those from the 4th year class, some of those who have completed the 3rd year class, but not the 4th year class, have to be included among the Census literates. The number of pupils who have completed the 3rd year but not the 4th year class during the decade comes to 1,66,000 (8,32,000 — 6,66,000). It is thus seen that not only all pupils who complete the 4th year class, but 66 per cent. of those who complete the 3rd year class but not the 4th year class, have attained literacy as required by the Census standard.

The contention that in Bombay a certain proportion of the literates recorded in the Census had gone up only to the 3rd year class is further supported by another set of figures. The 1921 Bombay Census Report shows 79,000 literate persons between the ages 5-10. These very young



literate almost without exception must be children attending primary schools at the time of the Census. The D. P. I.'s Report for the year 1920-21 gives figures of pupils in the age-group 5-10 reading in several school classes about two months after the Census date. The figures are as follows:

1st Year Class (Infants Std.)	2nd Year Class (I Std.)	3rd Year Class (II Std.)	4th Year Class (III Std.)	5th Year Class and above
2,82,000	1,01,000	65,000	37,000	16,000

These figures show that the literates (79,000) enumerated in the Census can be accounted for if we take *all* pupils in the 4th year class and above (53,000) and 26,000 from those not reading in these classes. It is not probable that a fair number of these could have been from the pupils who have left the school earlier in the previous decade. Almost the whole number, therefore, must be taken to have been contributed by pupils of that age-group (5-10) actually reading in the lower classes in 1921. Naturally it must be assumed that they come from the 3rd year rather than from the 2nd year class. The total number of pupils in the 3rd year class of ages 5 to 10 as given above was 65,000, and 26,000 of them gives a percentage of 40. This means that in the year 1921, 40 per cent. of the pupils in the 3rd year class and between ages 5 and 10 were actually counted as literates by the Census enumerators. The total number of pupils in the 3rd year class above 10 years of age in 1921 was 63,000. If 40 per cent. of the very young children between 5 and 10 years of age are counted as literates by the Census enumerators, it is quite probable that they would take a larger proportion as literates from those of ages 10 and over; and therefore the percentage of pupils reading in the 3rd year class taken as literates by the Census enumerators must be much larger.

The Census figures of 1921, therefore, very clearly show that in Bombay not only all pupils reading in the 4th year class were recorded as literates, but a substantial proportion from the 3rd year class was also counted as such. It follows that even in Bombay where literacy is acquired at a little later stage than in other Provinces, a substantial number of those who complete the 3rd year class but not the 4th year class are recorded as literates by the Census enumerators.

#### MADRAS.

From the Statement on page 27 it is seen that the Madras figures show a close correlation between the Census and Educational statistics of literacy on the assumption that the completion of the 3rd year class gives literacy within the meaning of the Census definition. The respective figures stand in the proportion of 16 : 17, on the assumption that the average percentage of pupils found fit for promotion to the higher class is the same as that obtained in Bombay, *i.e.*, 57. If this percentage is lower in Madras, then even some of the 2nd year class pupils would be found among the Census literates. If it is higher, the class giving literacy will be somewhere between the 3rd and 4th year classes. In the Census year 1931, there were 2,53,000 literates of ages 5 to 10 in Madras. The total number of pupils in the same age-group and reading in the 3rd year class and above was 2,23,000. In order to cover all literates of 5-10 given in the Census Report not only all pupils reading in the 3rd year class must have been taken as literates, but nearly 10 per cent. of those in the 2nd year class.

#### BENGAL.

Bengal presents a typical case in most respects. A glance at the Bengal figures given on page 26 shows that the question of taking the 4th year class pupils for purposes of determining the minimum class that gives literacy need not be considered at all. For, while the Census figures reveal that the number of new literates added in the decade was 14,93,000, the *total* number of pupils in the

4th year class during the decade (1922-31) was only 10,63,000. It is, therefore, necessary to take the 3rd year class figures to find out a correlation between the Census and Educational figures. Assuming that 57 per cent. of the total pupils in the 3rd year class are fit for promotion, the number of such pupils would come to 13 lakhs, while the number of new literates is 15 lakhs. The correlation, although not unsatisfactory, is not quite good. Two conclusions follow from this. Either Bengal has a higher percentage of 3rd year class pupils promoted to the higher class than in Bombay or the Census enumerators have taken as literates not only those completing the 3rd year class, but even many who have completed the 2nd year class only. Which of the two conclusions is nearer the truth cannot be definitely ascertained in the absence of the knowledge of the precise percentage of pupils promoted from the 3rd year to the 4th year class in Bengal.

This feature revealed by the Bengal figures, *viz.*, that literacy is attained in the 3rd year class is not fortuitous. It is due, probably, to the fact that in Bengal, unlike Bombay and Madras, the primary school system is divided into two stages—one, lower, comprising the first three classes and the other, upper, comprising the next two classes. There is a large number of lower primary schools in that Province teaching the first three classes only. Nearly 50 per cent. of the pupils reading in the 3rd year class leave school for good.

This fact, *viz.*, that in a large number of schools a three-year course is looked upon as a complete unit of education, would appear to influence the teaching in these schools to such an extent that large numbers of pupils who leave them without ever attending a further course, do really complete the 3rd year class, acquire literacy as prescribed by the Census standard and figure so in the Census Records.

This particular organization of the primary system seems to have been responsible for the phenomenon that from 1911 to 1931 Bengal has recorded the highest percentage of literacy among all the major Provinces of India.

For there do not seem to be any other features, either of the course of primary education or of its organization, of the birth-rate or death-rate, to account for this continuous lead of Bengal over the other Provinces.

#### UNITED PROVINCES.

In this Province, as in the case of Bengal, the question of the completion of the 4th year class being necessary for the acquisition of literacy does not arise. The total number of pupils reading in the 4th year class as shown on the rolls during the decade 1922-31 was 9,80,000; while the estimated number of new literates produced during the decade in the Province was 10,09,000. It is seen from the Statement on page 27 that applying the Bombay percentage of promotions to the 3rd year class, the number of promoted pupils from that class is 7,72,000, which, as is seen, is rather too low to establish a reasonable correlation with the estimated figure of literates (10,09,000) from the Census data.

The phenomenon is thus analogous to that of Bengal, and as in Bengal it may be due to two causes: (1) the percentage of promoted pupils from the 3rd year class may be far greater in U. P. than in Bombay or (2) the Census literacy standard is attained by many pupils who complete the 2nd year class. There is reason to believe that the first of these causes is the more plausible of the two.

Mr. S. N. Chaturvedi, in his admirable book—*An Educational Survey of a District (Etawah in U. P.)*—gives the examination results of boys' schools in Etawah for 1928.<sup>1</sup> The total number covered by the enquiry was about 20,000. In the 3rd year class, out of 2,593 pupils on roll, 2,142 passed, giving a percentage of 82 while the percentage for the same year for the whole of the Bombay Presidency was 63. If it is assumed that the Etawah District represents a fair sample for the whole of U. P. and further, that the percentage for 1928 is approximately the same for the decade 1922-31, it will be seen

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<sup>1</sup> p. 176.

that the number of promotions from the 3rd year class is far larger and approximates the estimated number of literates from the Census data. The number of pupils in the 3rd year class in U. P. during the decade was 13,54,000, 82 per cent. of this is 11,10,000; while the Census figures give the number of new literates as 10,09,000. The correlation is good. Anyhow, as in Bengal, so in U. P., it can safely be said that the Census literacy is attained by pupils completing the 3rd year class; and the remarks about the three-year class schools and their utility in the matter of promoting literacy made in regard to Bengal apply *mutatis mutandis* to U. P.

#### BIHAR AND ORISSA.

A glance at the Statement on page 27 shows that the case of Bihar and Orissa is somewhat like that of Bombay. The figures of literates deduced from the 4th year class pupils (3,35,000) is low enough if compared to the number of Census literates (5,08,000). On the other hand, the number of pupils promoted from the 3rd year class (6,58,000), on the basis of the Bombay percentage, is far higher than the Census figure of new literates. As Bihar and Orissa shares with Bengal and U. P. a three-year class system of lower primary stage, one would expect the Bihar and Orissa figures to be on the lines of those of Bengal and U. P. But actually they are not so.

It is suggested above that the peculiar organization of primary education of Bengal and U. P. succeeds in turning out a larger percentage of promotions from the 3rd year class or a larger number of literates. The Bihar and Orissa system being analogous, the number of those promoted from the 3rd year class or the number of new literates turned out from that class ought to be larger than the figure given above (6,58,000) on the basis of the Bombay percentage. Under the circumstances, if it can be proved that the percentage of promotions in Bihar and Orissa primary schools is rather low compared to Bengal and U. P., and even compared to Bombay, it may be reasonably concluded that there are some factors in the Bihar and Orissa system which make its working less efficient. As it

is, there is sufficient evidence to show that the percentage of promotions in Bihar and Orissa, not only from the 3rd year class, but in all probability of pupils from other classes also, is substantially lower than in Bombay. The D. P. I.'s Report for Bihar and Orissa for the years 1922-27 says<sup>1</sup> that in Chota-Nagpur, out of the 91,000 pupils in the first class, 61 per cent. were 'repeaters', 34 per cent. for two or more years, and 27 per cent. for more than a year. This appears to show that the promotions from that class must be smaller than in Bombay. In the Hartog Committee Report it is stated<sup>2</sup> that in Bihar (*i.e.*, Bihar and Orissa) only 57,000 pupils out of 1,25,000 passed from the 3rd year class, giving a percentage of 46. Applying this percentage to the number of pupils (11,55,000) on the roll of the 3rd year class in 1922-31, the figure of passes or promoted pupils from that class comes to 5,31,000 as against 5,08,000 new literates given by the Census data.

### C. P. AND THE PUNJAB.

The cases of the C. P. and the Punjab in which for some years past the primary school course has been brought down from five years to one of four years may now be considered. This four years' course is a continuous course without any further division into lower and higher stages. In both of these Provinces a glance at the table on page 27 shows that the Census figures of new literates exceed the figures of literates yielded by calculations based on the 3rd year class. In the Punjab the number of promotions from the 3rd year class on the basis of the Bombay percentage is seen from the Statement on page 27 to be 5,62,000, which is smaller than the estimated number of new literates from Census figures by 77,000. One speciality of the Punjab during this decade was an attempt at promotion of literacy among the adult illiterates. This effort is said to have produced 30,000 new adult literates during the decade. It is thus seen that the real difference between the number of Census literates and the number

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<sup>1</sup> p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> p. 48.

promoted from the 3rd year class is so small that for such calculations it can be neglected.

Moreover, if in the Punjab the percentage of promoted pupils to the total number on rolls in the 3rd year class is greater than in Bombay, the difference will be almost wholly eliminated and the correlation between the Census and Educational statistics will be well established on the basis of the 3rd year class being the class which gives literacy. In the absence of Educational statistics on this point, one may refer to the Punjab Census Report, 1931,<sup>1</sup> in which the writer of the Report assumes 66 per cent. of the 4th year class pupils on the roll as fit to be styled as literates for Census purposes. The basis on which this calculation is made is not known. If it is assumed that the writer of the Census Report has in view the successful completion of the 4th year class when he speaks of literates for Census purposes, then it may be taken that in his opinion the percentage of promotions from the 4th year class in the Punjab schools is 66. The Bombay percentage for this class is 58. The Punjab percentage is higher by 8 than that of Bombay. If this difference in the percentage for the 4th year class is supposed to hold good for promotions from the 3rd year class, the Bombay percentage of promotions from the 3rd year class which is 57 will have to be raised by about 8 to get at the approximate percentage of promotions from the 3rd year class in the Punjab schools. Applying this corrected percentage (65) to the Punjab data, it is found that the number of pupils promoted from the 3rd year class comes to 6,41,000, thus yielding a nearer approximation to the Census figure of literates.

Returning to the Central Provinces, one finds that if calculations are made on the assumption that the 3rd year class pupils do attain literacy, the figure arrived at falls short of the estimated figure of new literates from the Census data by about 62,000. The proportion between the two figures is 100 : 85. Two assumptions are possible

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, Part I, p. 254.

to account for this. Either the percentage of promoted pupils from the 3rd year class may be more than 57 or the C. P. enumerators may be taking some of the 2nd year class pupils also as literates. There seems to be no doubt that in the C. P. the Census standard of literacy is acquired by a larger proportion of pupils in the 3rd year class than in other Provinces. The teaching of reading and writing in the C. P. seems to be more effective, culminating in sending out a larger percentage of literates from the 3rd year class.

A guess may be hazarded to account for this peculiarity of the C. P. From the Hartog Committee Report<sup>1</sup> it is seen that in the C. P. the percentage of single-teacher schools is the lowest (16) among all Provinces of India and further "the majority of the single-teacher schools have only *three* classes",<sup>2</sup> in spite of the general system of four-year primary school prevailing in that Province. The Punjab has the next lowest percentage of single-teacher schools (25), but there, the single-teacher school has four classes and not three, as in the C. P. It would, therefore, appear that in effectiveness of teaching the essential subjects of a primary course, a teacher with three classes to manage is able to put in better work than one who has to teach four classes or one who is saddled with five classes.

#### TRAVANCORE.

Travancore and Cochin lead all the Provinces and States of India in regard to literacy. In 1931 the literacy percentage in Travancore was 24. The literates in 1921 were 9,67,000 and in 1931, 12,18,000. Thus the increase was 2,51,000. Applying a death-rate of 23 per cent. for the decade the deaths among the literates in the decade would number 2,22,000. Therefore, the number of new literates living in 1931 would be 2,51,000 plus 2,22,000, *i.e.*, 4,73,000, and of all the new literates produced during the decade, including those that died in the decade, would be 4,98,000. —

<sup>1</sup> pp. 60-61.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.



The total number of pupils on rolls in the 4th year class during the decade 1922-31 was 6,03,000.<sup>1</sup> Applying the standard percentage of 58 adopted up to now for promoted pupils, it is seen that 3,50,000 would be found fit for promotion. The figure 3,50,000 is much less than 4,98,000, and hence one has to look to the 3rd year class for the test of literacy. The total number of pupils on the rolls of the 3rd year class is not available. It is, however, possible to make a rough estimate of the number. The Report<sup>2</sup> gives the proportion of pupils in the 4th year class to the pupils in the 3rd year class as being 14.6 to 21.1. On this basis, the total number of pupils on the roll of the 3rd year class during the decade 1922-31 in Travancore would be 8,70,000 in round figures. Applying the Bombay percentage of promoted pupils, i.e., 57, it is seen that from the 3rd year class the literates produced would be 4,96,000. If the Bombay percentages of promoted pupils were to hold good in Travancore during the decade 1922-31, the Census literacy may be assumed to have been attained by those who have completed the 3rd year class.

While considering the cases of Bengal and U. P. it was observed that the existence of the three-year class school on a very large scale in those provinces has given them a cheaper and quicker agency for producing literates. Travancore has been at the forefront in literacy in India almost from the time of the first Census. It is interesting to enquire, therefore, whether Travancore had ever employed this cheaper and quicker agency of producing literates. Today, Travancore, no doubt, has a four-year system of primary education. Till 1895, however, Travancore had a lower primary course of two classes. From 1895 the two-year lower primary stage was raised to a three-year one (by inclusion of the Infants' class at the bottom). From 1902, the primary school had a two-class lower primary stage and a four-year upper one. The last reshuffling was done in 1909 when the primary school was

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Travancore Education Reforms Committee (1933), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

divided into two grades—the lower grade of four classes and higher one of seven classes. This historical sketch of the primary school system in Travancore shows that till 1909, there was a class of lower primary school which taught only two or three classes and which must have been the most common type of school for the education of the masses in that State.

### BURMA.

The problem of literacy in Burma is somewhat unique. Burma until 1937 was a part of British India and, although it is now separated, the study of its literacy statistics is highly interesting from many points of view. The system of primary education promulgated by the Government of Burma is just as it is in Bombay. Burma stands head and shoulders above all the other Indian Provinces in point of literacy. In 1931 the percentage was 31.3, as compared to a maximum of 10 of any Indian Province. This high percentage of literacy in Burma is not due to any sound Government system of primary education; for the Burmese system has all the defects of the Indian system as a whole. Nor is the percentage of population in the schools conducted under the Government system higher than, say, in Bombay. In 1932, for instance, the percentage of male population of school-going age receiving instruction in primary classes I to V was 50 for Bombay, 42 for British India and 24 for Burma, in primary schools *recognised by Government*. From this, it will be seen that Burma ought to be far behind Bombay in literacy, if its literacy were to be the concern mainly of the recognised schools in the Province. In Burma, in the decade 1922-31, the following numbers<sup>1</sup> were enrolled in the primary 3rd and 4th year classes in the recognised schools:

5,28,000	..	..	3rd year class
3,30,000	..	..	4th year class.

Taking these figures and applying the usual percentages of promotions (57 for the 3rd year class and 58 for the

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<sup>1</sup> The figures are approximate, *vide* Appendix D (iii).

4th year class), the numbers obtained are 3,00,000 for the 3rd year class and 1,91,000 for the 4th year class, respectively. But the number of new literates added to the population of Burma during the decade 1922-31 comes to about 19,00,000. This shows that not even 20 per cent. of the new literates recorded in the Census could be contributed by the Burmese recognised primary schools. It is, therefore, of interest to enquire the source of the remaining 80 per cent. of the new literates.

In Burma, there is a large number of monastic schools conducted in temples by Buddhist monks and priests in which, from old times, a large number of children has been receiving a sort of primary education consisting mainly of the three R's. During recent years, some of these monastic or temple schools have been brought into the official system of primary education by aiding and recognising them. Such schools follow in some respects the officially prescribed curricula. But there are many monastic schools which do not conform to the Government rules and they carry on their work of teaching children in their own way. The importance of these unrecognized monastic schools—however imperfect they may be according to the prescribed standards—can be realised when it is seen that the number of children under instruction in these schools in 1934-35 was about 2,00,000<sup>1</sup>, while the number of children learning in all recognised primary schools was 2,84,000. These monastic schools are so widely spread that they reach 20,000 out of 32,000 villages in Burma. The schools recognised by Government number about 4,500. The effect of this has been that Burma was able to add in the decade 1921-31 new literates to the extent of about 19 lakhs in its population of about 1½ crore, although according to the usual calculations the recognised primary schools would have been able to add new literates numbering about 3 lakhs only. The indigenous schools are, therefore, a great asset to Burma in promoting literacy.

The unrecognised monastic schools retain their pupils for two or three years, within which time they become

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<sup>1</sup> The number seems to be underestimated.

literate according to the Census standard. They have not to pass examinations and follow a rigidly prescribed course of instruction consisting of the usual staple of a recognised primary school. There is no need for detaining pupils in the same class because of failure to pass a test; for there are no classes, as the school as a whole is one class, each pupil doing his own work according to his ability. There may be very little 'wastage' because the schools are people's schools and the people themselves send the children of their own accord. That is why these twenty thousand schools are able to send out such a large number of literates. This would be absolutely impossible if the usual stagnation and wastage factors were to operate in these schools. The situation can be explained only on one supposition, *viz.*, that every child who enters a monastic school leaves it in a couple of years after attaining literacy as required by the Census standard.

It has been shown above that the three-class primary schools are a great asset in promoting literacy as prescribed by the Census definition. This is particularly so in Bengal and the United Provinces. The official opinion, however, about these schools seems to be different. For instance, the Bengal Quinquennial Report for 1927-32 says in reference to these schools: "In spreading literacy the lower primary schools are almost wholly useless".<sup>1</sup>

The survey of literacy statistics taken in the foregoing pages covers most of the Indian Provinces. Its utility has, however, been slightly marred by the absence of data relating to the percentage of promoted pupils for Provinces other than Bombay. In analysing the literacy data for other Provinces, therefore, the percentage of promotions in Bombay has been applied generally. From a strictly statistical point of view this is not quite correct. But in view of the fact that the Bombay percentage is on the whole on the upward level, there is good reason to believe that the application of the Bombay percentage to the other Provinces does not in any way vitiate the calculations made or the conclusion reached.

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<sup>1</sup> p. 24.

## CHAPTER V

### LAPSE INTO ILLITERACY

In the two previous chapters an attempt was made to establish a correlation between the Census and the Educational statistics of literacy. The conclusions reached were as follows:

- (1) The British Indian figures show that the completion of the 3rd year class gives literacy.
- (2) In most Provinces literacy is attained with the completion of the 3rd year class or even earlier, and in no case does the completion of the 4th year class fail to impart literacy.

In ascertaining the degree of correlation between the Census and Educational figures, the factor of relapse into illiteracy was not taken into account. In fact it was not even referred to because once this factor was brought into discussion there would have been no end to speculation. The calculations in the previous pages are based on the assumption that when once a person acquires literacy as required by the Census standard, he retains it permanently and that he does not relapse into illiteracy. It has been shown that, in the case of the whole of British India, a child who has been able to put in one year or more in the 3rd year class and has been further able to secure promotion to the 4th year class has attained literacy which does not disappear later. In other words, the practice of reading and writing which he puts in during his three or more years' stay in the school is sufficient to ensure for him the retention of the acquired ability to read and write. His literacy is thus a permanent acquisition.

The statistical discussion in the previous pages relates to a period of 10 years from 1922 to 1931. A certain proportion of those acquiring literacy at the beginning of

this period would relapse into illiteracy at the end, if the literacy acquired were of a fleeting nature. That this is not so is proved by the correlation which has been established between the Census and Educational statistics.

To illustrate : The Bombay statistics show that the completion of the 4th year class is the surest guarantee for the acquisition of literacy in the Census term of the word. So far as the 4th year class is concerned, therefore, there would be absolutely no relapse to be contemplated. But if the completion of the 3rd year class is to give literacy, then it may be necessary to take into account the factor of relapse into illiteracy. On the assumption that in Bombay a pupil who completes the 3rd year class becomes literate in the Census term of the word, it is seen from the Statement on page 27 that during the decade the schools produced 8,32,000 literates. The Census figures show the addition of 7,75,000 literates. It would, therefore, follow that the difference of 57,000 between the two represents the number which, though rendered literate by schools, lapsed into illiteracy. Thus the lapse comes to about 9 per cent. In Madras, on the same assumption, the percentage of lapse into illiteracy would come to 4. In the case of Bengal, U. P., C. P. and the Punjab, if the completion of the 3rd year class were to give literacy, it would appear from the figures on page 27 that there would be no relapse whatever. If, however, the completion of the 2nd year class were to give literacy, there would no doubt be enough scope for relapse into illiteracy. For British India as a whole, if the completion of the 3rd year class is taken as sufficient for the acquisition of literacy, there is no room for relapse.

Any discussion of mass education in India is not regarded as being complete without a reference to lapse into illiteracy. The question may be considered in its two-fold aspect: (1) the general question of wastage, (2) relapse into illiteracy occurring after attainment of literacy. Relapse means losing a capacity which has been acquired. If the capacity is not acquired, there can be no relapse. For instance, many pupils, who on the completion of the 2nd year class are able to read a simple book

tolerably well, have *not* acquired literacy as required by the Census standard. If such pupils were to leave school and have no further opportunities of perfecting their ability to read and write, they would certainly be classed as illiterates for the purpose of the Census. Such cases cannot, however, be regarded as being those of relapse into illiteracy, because such persons did not lose literacy after acquiring it, which fact is the essence of the matter.

The first attempt at making a numerical estimate of the alleged 'lapse into illiteracy' in British Indian schools was made by Sir Henry Sharp in the Progress of Education in India, 1907-1912.<sup>1</sup> He took the number of children in the first five classes of primary schools assuming that they would be aged between 5 and 10 years. Comparing the 1912 Educational figures with those of 1911 Census figures, he calculated that for every thousand children of those ages 148 were at school. He further calculated from the 1911 Census figures that 91 per thousand persons between the ages of 15-20 were literates. Thus according to him out of 148 children at school only 91 became literate. Therefore, the lapse into illiteracy came to 39 per cent. It is unnecessary to enter into the merits of these calculations, because the writer himself was conscious of their limitations.

It should be noted that Sir Henry Sharp took *all* the children in schools in the first five classes in a particular year and found that 61 per cent. of them were subsequently returned as literates in the Census. Those not so returned and numbering 39 per cent. included all who might have left school from the 1st year class onwards. It would appear that most of these children must have left school after attending it for one or two years. Hence such children who had not acquired the requisite standard of literacy while at school cannot be said to have lapsed into illiteracy. The term 'lapse into illiteracy' is used here in a loose sense. It would be more accurate to say that these children left school without attaining literacy, thus causing wastage of money and

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 142-143.

efforts. But it does not give us any indication as to whether any of those who were rendered literate in schools according to the prescribed standard were returned as illiterate later on.

Another attempt to gauge the extent of 'lapsing into illiteracy' has been made by Mr. K. N. Kini of Mysore in his Report on the Educational Survey in Mysore "just to obtain an estimate of the extent to which people who once received some education in our primary schools lapsed into illiteracy on leaving school and on entering life".<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kini undertook an intensive survey in one village in the Bangalore district. The village had a population of about 1360 and it had for a long time three schools—one for boys, one for girls and one for Urdu boys. The adults (above 18), who were found to be living in the village at the time of the enquiry, were subjected to a test in reading and writing. The test was confined only to men and women whose names were found on the admission registers of the schools. The time spent by each in school and the class from which the person left school were not considered at all. The result of the enquiry was that out of 532 persons covered, 108 were found to have lapsed into illiteracy, *i.e.*, they were not able to read and write according to the test applied. The percentage of 'lapsing into illiteracy' came to 20 for all persons tested.

The question arises: Had all the persons who were found unable to pass the test become literate when they left school? Assuming that only those who spent a year or more in the 3rd year class had become literate, those who had not reached that stage then could not be regarded as having lapsed into illiteracy. Mr. Kini himself throws some light on this question. He says: "It was found that many of those who became illiterate had not gone beyond the second primary class while at school".<sup>2</sup> Had Mr. Kini given detailed statistics of the educational attainments of those covered by his enquiry, a real insight into

<sup>1</sup> p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.



the question of 'lapsing into illiteracy' might have been obtained. The methods followed by both Sharp and Kini are similar, inasmuch as they do not differentiate between persons of different educational attainments, although the results obtained show a wide divergence. It should be pointed out here that Mr. Kini's is the first systematic attempt in India to ascertain by means of an actual test the percentage of those who, having attended a school, could not satisfy a literacy test later.

The Hartog Committee have observed as follows on the question of 'relapse into illiteracy': "Relapse into illiteracy:—The losses due to wastage prevent all but few pupils from becoming literate, but even of these few it is not possible to say with any confidence that many will not rapidly relapse into illiteracy. It is impossible to give figures for such relapse but there is every indication that they are large. It is difficult to correlate at all satisfactorily the Census figures for literacy with the figures for school attendance. But the fact that the number of literates in the age-group 10-15 in the Census of 1921 was approximately only half the number of pupils in the age-group 5-10 at school five years previously indicates not only waste but a rapid relapse into illiteracy".<sup>1</sup>

The Committee's use of the term 'relapse into illiteracy' is the correct one. They have clearly divided the issue into two separate questions: (1) wastage which represents pupils leaving school before attaining literacy and (2) relapse into illiteracy which includes those who lose their literacy after acquiring it at school. It may be mentioned here that in the opinion of the Hartog Committee the minimum for the attainment of (permanent) literacy is the completion of the 4th year class of a primary school.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the Committee should have found it difficult to correlate satisfactorily the Census figures for literacy with the figures for school attendance.

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<sup>1</sup> Hartog Committee Report, pp. 48-49.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

For it has been already shown that the correlation could be established only on the supposition that the completion of the 3rd year class gives (permanent) literacy and not of the 4th year class, as was assumed by the Committee. The comparison of the Census and Educational statistics referred to by the Committee gives some insight into the extent of wastage only and not at all into that of relapse. It appears the Committee took for granted whatever views were current on the subject of relapse. Wastage and relapse are two entirely different problems. The one must not be confused with the other.

The following extract from the Census Report of Bengal, 1921, is of interest in this connection, as it shows that those who had tried to correlate the Census and the Educational statistics, finding that the Census figures did not reveal any lapse into illiteracy, came to the conclusion that the Census figures must be inaccurate as they did not bear out their preconceived notion of a large relapse into illiteracy: "An attempt was made to discover the bearing of the census figures on the extent of lapse from literacy, but it proved abortive. The census figures do not in fact indicate that there is any great lapse from literacy in Bengal. The result may be partly explained by the fact that a number of men employed as *durwans* and peons and in other capacities in which they are kept waiting about for long periods without much to occupy them, do teach themselves to read after they have reached maturity. Such persons are the employees of persons who use the art of letters, they realise the advantage of being able to read and write, appreciate the fact that they can only rise higher in the employment of their masters by acquiring some education and take steps to do so. In Eastern Bengal moreover a bearded Muhammadan school boy is not a very uncommon sight, and a class in a vernacular school often includes one or two whose age is half as much again as the average for the class. But still the conclusion is inevitable that the return of literacy in adult ages is not accurate. The man who reached the census standard of literacy when he was at school will not

admit that his knowledge has slipped from him, and perhaps, not having tried his hand for a very long time, is quite unconscious that this has happened. The enumerator has not time to examine each person he enumerates, and adults would resent any attempt on his part to do so. He can read and write himself and very often he has known those whom he is to enumerate all his life. He remembers that so and so was at school in the same class as himself or his brothers and assumes that he has retained his knowledge as he himself has retained it. The fact that the prescription of a standard of literacy for the first time at the Census of 1911 made little difference in the proportion of literates over the age of 20, though it made some at earlier ages, points to the probability that the standard is not strictly applied to adults, and the conclusion is inevitable that the census statistics gravely exaggerate the number of adults who are literate".<sup>1</sup>

Comment on the above extract seems superfluous, as it is obviously a laboured attempt at fitting assumptions with facts and, when the facts do not suit, to call them wrong. That the Census literacy statistics are not so grossly inaccurate as they are made out to be in the Bengal Report, is clear from the following statement of the author of Census of India 1921 : "On the whole there is a consensus of opinion that the simple criterion laid down was easily understood and sensibly interpreted". (*Vide* page 7.)

In India no field investigation on a large scale has been attempted to ascertain the number of persons who have completed the course of a class that gives literacy and yet have relapsed into a state of illiteracy later on. Only the results of such an enquiry can provide reliable evidence on this point and not the casual observations of persons however high-placed they may be. If such an enquiry is undertaken under proper safeguards so as to eliminate under-rating or over-rating, the findings would be acceptable. A fair sample of a vague generalization is

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<sup>1</sup> Bengal Census Report, 1921, pp. 288-289.

supplied by the following statement of an Inspector of Schools: "It has been ascertained on enquiries personally made and tests taken by me that children that leave school on completing their second standard (here 3rd year class) lapse into illiteracy in a course of three or four years. As regards children who drop off after completing standard III (here 4th year class) they can only spell some reading matter with difficulty after three or four years. If they have no occasion at all to read or write, these also lapse into illiteracy in the course of seven or eight years. Those children who have been in standard IV (here fifth year class) retain something of what they have learnt in schools. This shows that a boy may be said to be literate if he has studied up to standard IV (here fifth year class)".<sup>1</sup>

These observations, admirable as they are in giving mathematical precision to the enquiry, cannot be taken seriously. The enquirer, it appears, wanted to support the view held in official quarters that a boy did not become literate unless he *passed* the test of the 5th year class. He took up a few cases in a village in one of his rounds, applied to them certain tests and reached his conclusions. Unless one is assured that the officer did take representative sample and applied a uniform test to fair numbers, his conclusions have no value.

A comparison of the Census and the Educational statistics for the whole of British India shows that the completion of the 3rd year class gives literacy; while the Provincial statistics show that literacy is attained by the completion of the 3rd or at the most of the 4th year class. It has further been shown that when a pupil acquires literacy, he does not relapse into illiteracy. In some parts of India, however, opinions are being expressed that even the completion of the 4th year class does not give a pupil literacy or rather permanent literacy, and that for securing 'permanent literacy' it is necessary to make the pupil complete the 5th year class.

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<sup>1</sup> Bombay D.P.I.'s Report for 1917-22, pp. 66-67.

The following extract from the Report of the Travancore Educational Reforms Committee (1933) is of interest: "The schools and literacy.—The extent to which the primary school system in Travancore has been contributing to the general literacy of the State can to some extent be decided by an examination of the number of children who leave class five and may be assumed to have acquired permanent literacy. Some years ago, the primary system in Travancore was based on three-class primary schools. The three-class system, however, was found to be inadequate; and, the present primary system is based upon four-class schools. We are not willing, however, to accept the theory that all pupils who have read up to the fourth class can be regarded as permanent literates. There is abundant evidence, not merely in Travancore but all over India and elsewhere, that, for a pupil to reach the fourth class is no guarantee of permanent literacy unless that pupil either continues education or goes back to a literate home and a literate atmosphere".<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that in a previous place (pp. 37-39) the bearing of the Census literacy figures on the Educational figures of Travancore has been discussed. The calculations made clearly show that the Census standard of literacy is permanently retained not only by *all* pupils who complete the 4th year class, but by almost all pupils who complete the 3rd year class. The calculations made there are, however, based upon the Bombay percentages of promoted pupils. It may be argued that the Bombay percentage may be too low for Travancore where education has advanced to an extent unknown in most other parts of India and hence the conclusions drawn may not really hold good for Travancore. It would, therefore, be better if the statistics are re-examined by the adoption of a percentage based upon Travancore figures. The latest Annual Report of the D. P. I. of Travancore for M. E. 1112 (*i.e.*, A.D. 1937) gives figures<sup>2</sup> of pupils who are reported to be for more

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Travancore Educational Reforms Committee (1933), pp. 76-77.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report of the D.P.I. of Travancore for M. E. 1112, p. 92.

than one year in the first four classes of the primary schools, i.e., the number of 'repeaters' in each class. It is seen from these figures that the percentage of 'repeaters' for the 4th year class is 24. This means that in that year out of 100 pupils on the roll of that class, 76 were there for one year and the remaining 24 for more than one year. It is mentioned in the Report that this was achieved after strenuous efforts on the part of educational officers to reduce stagnation and to accelerate promotions. In the years 1922-1931, therefore, the percentage of 'repeaters' must indeed be greater than 24. However, to be on firm ground, the same percentage, viz., 24, for the whole of the decade 1922-31 may be taken. The Report of the Travancore Education Reforms Committee gives the total number of pupils on the roll during the ten years 1922-1931 in the 4th and 5th year classes as under:

4th Year Class	..	..	..	603,000
5th Year Class	..	..	..	272,000

Eliminating 24 per cent. from the 4th year class pupils, the remaining 76 per cent. will be pupils who have been in the 4th year class for one year only. Thus the number in the 4th year class excluding 'repeaters' comes to 4,58,000. These are the pupils who have received the benefit of schooling in the 4th year class at least for a year. Supposing for the sake of argument that every one of them has become literate, then the schools' contribution to the general literacy of the State during the decade should be 4,58,000. The calculations from the Census figures show that the total output of literates in the State during the decade 1922-31 was 4,98,000 (*vide* p. 37); while the output accounted for by schools was 4,58,000. If the latter figure (4,58,000) were greater than the former (4,98,000), then it could have been said that there was scope for relapse into illiteracy. But it is not so. The calculations show that every single person who left school after completing the 4th year class from the year 1922 onwards has remained literate all along; not only that, but the difference of 40,000 (4,98,000-4,58,000) has to be accounted for by the assumption that either it is the product of extra-school agencies

for producing literates or that not only all pupils who read for one year in the 4th year class have become permanently literate, but some from those who completed the 3rd year class, but have not had the opportunity to remain for one year in the 4th year class, have attained literacy and retained it for good.

The Travancore Committee's Report says that "the contribution to the general literacy of the State can to some extent be decided by an examination of the number of children who leave class five and may be assumed to have permanent literacy".<sup>1</sup>

The number on the rolls of the 5th year class during the decade 1922-31 was 2,72,000. The percentage of 'repeaters' in this class is not known. Assuming for the sake of argument that the percentage of 'repeaters' was 10, this gives about 2,45,000 new literates added during the decade by schools. The Census figures show an output of 4,98,000 new literates during the decade. If, therefore, one were to agree with the Educational Reforms Committee's view that the 5th year class supplies the quota of literates, not even half the number of the new literates shown by the Census figures would be covered by that number.

The view expressed in the Travancore Committee's Report is shared by others as well. In Mysore where for some years past a four-year primary course is current, similar advice is tendered to that State by the Committee on the Reorganisation of Education (1936). But the Mysore Committee are not content with raising the minimum course from four to five years, as is done by the Travancore Committee. They prescribe a six years' course.<sup>2</sup>

In repeatedly maintaining the view that once a pupil acquires literacy in school by completing a particular class that gives literacy, he does not relapse into illiteracy, reliance has been placed on a comparative study of the Census and Educational statistics. The

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<sup>1</sup> Travancore Committee's Report, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Committee on the Reorganisation of Education (1936), p. 22.

theory of relapse can, on the basis of these statistics, be reconciled only if one were to assume that there is an equal number of adult illiterates being made literates and *vice versa*.

When a large body of informed opinion stoutly aver that there is lapse into illiteracy on a considerable scale, although statistics may not support that view, it would be wise to enquire further into the matter.

The Hartog Committee have observed as follows: "The explanation of such relapse is simple. Retention of initial literacy acquired at early age of ten or eleven depends largely on environment, and the environment of the great majority of the Indian pupils who leave school at the primary stage is not conducive to such retention. The parents in the village home are usually illiterate, they are too poor to buy books, and attractive vernacular literature and periodicals suitable to children are not available, though there are vernacular books which might be read by children under religious impulse".<sup>1</sup>

The writer of the Baroda Census Report of 1921 goes still deeper into the problem and says: "With men of the agricultural classes—and especially in communities whom learning is an irksome novelty—the results of schooling are soon apt to be effected in the more urgent work of earning their livelihood from the soil. The hard labour which tilling entails is a drain upon their mental energy; the routine of their daily tasks and the dull greyiness of their unremitting toil do little to remind them of their childhood's reading".<sup>2</sup>

One more quotation may be permitted. The Bengal Census Report of 1921 paints a most vivid picture of what happens to the village boy when he leaves school in Bengal: "The village boy when he leaves school in Bengal and takes his share in the cultivation of his father's land has very little inducement to keep up his knowledge, even the most elementary knowledge of reading and writing. He

<sup>1</sup> Hartog Report, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Baroda Report, p. 269.



reads no books or newspapers, and hardly ever even sees the written word. The family keeps no accounts, no shop-keeper's name is inscribed over the few shops to be found in rural areas, no articles for sale are marked with price, and there are no hoardings. Not even an advertisement catches his eye. The only written or printed papers which are to be found in a cultivator's house are the rent receipts given by his landlord, a document or two which has reference to his land written in legal phraseology in such a manner that it is the last thing a stumbling reader would wish to tackle, and perhaps some copies of evidence or a judgment in English in some case in which he has been an interested party. The newspapers published in the towns have a very small circulation in the towns themselves and none outside, partly for the reason that the topics upon which they are exercised generally refer to party faction in which but a limited number of persons of the town itself are interested. They contain nothing of interest to the villager. In the circumstances it is inevitable that there must be much lapse from literacy".<sup>1</sup>

The environmental conditions mentioned in the above extracts are in consonance with reality and yet it is possible to maintain that they do not cause relapse into illiteracy. Not because they are not derogatory to the retention of literacy, but because at least until now the children from such homes hardly remain in schools to acquire literacy as judged by the Census standard. The great majority who leave in the middle for various causes are from such homes and hence the almost complete loss of what little they had learnt at school is apt to be called 'relapse into illiteracy'. There may be few real literates who may have such environment; and in their case they may be prone to lapse into illiteracy after a sufficient passage of time. But even in the case of such persons the slightest chance to revive literacy will remove the rust off the tools of knowledge acquired at school.

The crux of the problem of the relapse into illiteracy or the maintenance and improvement of literacy imper-

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<sup>1</sup> Bengal Report, p. 288.

fectly acquired at school is then the after-school environment of the pupil. The schools can give at the most literacy, but they cannot be held responsible and condemned as inefficient if, when the pupil leaves school, he goes into an environment where he cannot maintain it and make use of it for his own benefit and for the benefit of his fellow-men. Literacy by itself is no blessing and unless the literates do make proper use of their literacy they are as good as illiterates. Do the advocates of a five-year or six-year course of minimum primary education believe that a pupil by staying for a year or two more in a school will acquire that kind of literacy which is above relapse under any environment whatsoever? And even supposing it is so, what is the use of that literacy if the after-school environment does not afford any facility for its profitable use? (If a pupil after leaving school goes back to a literate home or a literate atmosphere, it does not matter even if his literacy is not as high as the Census standard of literacy. If he unfortunately goes into an absolutely illiterate home with no chance for revising his acquisition, it does not matter in the least whether he spends a year or two more at school. In order to enable one to create a suitable literate atmosphere for oneself, irrespective of one's own environment, a person has to continue uninterrupted his education for a considerable time beyond the minimum required for attaining literacy. The State would be well advised to spend the money required for maintaining pupils for one year more at school in making suitable literature available to those who have already become literates or even semi-literates. Money spent on the instruction of one boy in the school for one year in the higher class will keep sharp the literacy of at least ten through suitable agencies such as libraries or by the distribution of very cheap but suitable and useful reading material. The first kind of expenditure is of doubtful utility from the point of view of promotion of literacy; but the second kind will be effectively useful not to one only but to many.)

## CHAPTER VI

### WASTAGE

In the preceding chapter it has been shown that in India a general impression prevails that a considerable number of pupils does not reach a class which gives them literacy. Further, some hold that even from amongst the pupils who are sufficiently advanced in instruction so as to attain literacy, a good many subsequently relapse into illiteracy. While the first view is borne out by facts, the second is not supported by a comparative study of the Census and Educational statistics. The causes of the failure of the Indian educational system to promote literacy on an adequate scale may be several. The idea, however, which dominates all discussions on mass education in India, whether official or otherwise, is that of 'wastage'. In fact, no discourse on mass education is regarded as complete unless it contains a statistical interpretation of the alleged wastage. The seriousness of this problem has been so much emphasized that it has led some to raise a cry of 'halt' and "the question is now asked whether an increase in the number of pupils is necessarily followed by a commensurate reduction in illiteracy".<sup>1</sup> The worst feature of this pessimism in the matter of expansion of mass education is, that an utter sense of despondency and despair seems to have obsessed those who are placed in authority to guide the country in its onward march towards universal education. Referring to the prospects of universal compulsion in India, it is observed: "The figures are astronomical and it will be long before universal compulsion can be introduced".<sup>2</sup> Now 'astronomical' figures—like the distance between the earth and the sun—are figures which excite imagination and are to be appreciated only in the realm of intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> *Progress of Education in India, 1927-32*, Vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Education in India in 1934-35*, p. 49.

speculation. They will never come within the orbit of human experience. If such feelings are entertained at the threshold of our educational advance, there is little hope of further progress. The key-note of progress is a robust optimism. If other nations have achieved their goal, or are marching triumphantly towards its realization, there is no reason why India also should not be able to progress. Remedies for the prevention of wastage have been suggested by various writers almost from the day of its discovery a quarter of a century ago. Although every suggestion in this respect may not be acceptable, most of them are likely to be effective and if determined efforts to combat the evil had been made wastage would not have become 'chronic' as it has been declared to be.

In order to have a clear idea of what wastage is, one cannot do better than quote from the Hartog Committee's Report: "By 'Wastage'.....we mean the premature withdrawal of children from school at any stage before completion of the primary course. There is of course a diminution in numbers from class to class due to natural causes, such as death and illness, but the mortality figures show that such diminution must be small compared to the total diminution".<sup>1</sup>

It would be interesting to trace the discovery of this evil and give an account of the various methods adopted to give it a numerical expression. The first mention of 'wastage in schools' was made in the Progress of Education in India (Quinquennial Review) for 1907-12.<sup>2</sup> The term, however, was used there with reference to secondary and higher education. But the writer of the same Report refers to the problem of 'School-age and Literacy'<sup>3</sup> and for the first time draws attention to the short duration of school-life in India and also to the most important problem of the failure of education to produce literacy on an adequate scale. Shortly before the publication of this

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<sup>1</sup> p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

Report, the late Mr. G. K. Gokhale had brought in the then Imperial Legislative Council, a private Bill for the introduction of compulsory education. The Bill was officially opposed and thrown out as "premature and calculated to throw back the cause of elementary education".<sup>1</sup> In spite of the official opposition to this measure, the Government must have recognised the justice of Mr. Gokhale's demand and applied close attention to find out the defects of the educational system so as to devise ways and means to improve it. For it was felt that "a system that would not substantially increase the literacy in India in fifty years stood condemned as financially impracticable in a poor country".<sup>2</sup> Thus, it appears, was discovered the evil of wastage which in the Progress of Education in India, 1907-12, got a numerical expression. As is already mentioned (*vide* page 44) Sir Henry Sharp found that the 'lapse into illiteracy' in Indian Education came to 39 per cent. It is already shown that what he really tried to measure was not 'lapse into illiteracy' but 'wastage' as it is now generally understood.

In the next Progress of Education in India, 1912-17, the word 'wastage' was again used in reference to secondary education, but was not specifically used in reference to primary education. However, the Report discusses the "early abandonment of studies" in primary schools and aptly describes that problem as "the greatest crux in the whole question of elementary education in India".<sup>3</sup> It also mentions the concomitant evil of 'stagnation'. The significant passage is worth quoting: "The shortness of time passed at school by the average pupil who enters a primary institution undoubtedly accounts for the fact that the figures of literacy are less than what would be justified by the figures of school attendance. But this is not the only reason. Not only is the duration of school life short, but it is too often marked

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<sup>1</sup> Progress of Education in India, 1907-12, Vol. I, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> The Education of India—Mayhew, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I, p. 110.

by stagnation. The central and most unsatisfactory feature of primary education is the fact that the great majority of the children are in the lower primary classes and nearly half in the most rudimentary stage".<sup>1</sup> Both the evils—wastage and stagnation—were by now fully recognised although the term 'wastage' was not yet used in reference to the evil.

The writer of the next Progress of Education in India, 1917-22, dropped altogether the reference to 'wastage in schools' with regard to secondary schools and after discussing the various evils of primary education in the strain of his predecessor, remarked: "the only effective method of checking irregular attendance and wastage was compulsory education which is no longer a wholly impossible ideal".<sup>2</sup> Here there is a clear reference to what is called 'wastage'.

The credit of further elucidating this problem by suggesting a method for measuring wastage, goes to Mr. R. Littlehalles, the writer of Progress of Education in India, 1922-27. For the first time in the Quinquennial Reports for Indian Education, he treated the whole question of failure of primary education in India in relation to its various aspects such as "duration of school life, illiteracy, wastage and stagnation".<sup>3</sup> In the Annual Report of Education in India for 1923-24, he laid down a simple method for measuring wastage.<sup>4</sup> The measure according to him "is obtained by comparing the number of pupils reading in any standard, say, the 3rd standard, with the number of pupils who read in the immediately junior standard in the previous year". On the basis of these calculations he remarks, "the total wastage of educational efforts and its concurrent dissipation of educational funds in the primary classes is about fifty per cent. of the total energy put forth".<sup>5</sup> This was based, it appears, on the fact that out of about 61 lakhs of pupils reading in the first four classes

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I, p. 123.

<sup>4</sup> Report, pp. 30-31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31

in 1922-23, about 28 lakhs left school in the middle in 1923-24 before reaching the 4th year class. In the calculations made in the Report for 1923-24, Mr. Littlehalles took up for comparison the figures of two consecutive years only. But later on, in his Progress of Education in India, 1922-27<sup>1</sup> he took five consecutive years and showed elimination or wastage from class to class. The Hartog Committee also in their Report<sup>2</sup> adopted the method suggested by Mr. Littlehalles in the Progress of Education and since that time it has become so popular that there is hardly an Educational Report which does not supply figures of pupils for four or five consecutive years and calculate wastage in this manner. Education in India in 1934-35 contains the following on this question: "In the whole of India (for boys) 74 per cent. of those who attend primary schools fail to reach class IV where they may be said to attain permanent literacy".<sup>3</sup> For girls it is said "out of every hundred girls who enter a girls' school in the lowest class, only 13 per cent. reach class IV in which permanent literacy may be expected. That is, 87 per cent. are wasting their time and the taxpayer's money".<sup>4</sup> Calculated for both boys and girls together, the percentage of wastage comes to 77.

It may be stated here that in arriving at a measurement of 'wastage' the methods have not been uniform. The first figure (39) (*vide* p. 44) was arrived at by a comparative study of the Census and the Educational statistics. The second figure (50) (*vide* p. 59) was obtained by finding out the number of pupils that were eliminated from class to class by comparing figures of pupils on roll for two consecutive years; while the third figure (77) was arrived at by taking figures for a period of four years (1931-32 to 1934-35) and from class to class.

Each of these three methods has its merits and demerits. In the first method calculations are made by

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 126-127.

<sup>2</sup> p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Report, pp. 46-47.

<sup>4</sup> p. 61.

comparing two sets of statistics independently recorded without any assumption as regards the class that gives literacy. In the second and third methods, the assumption is made that the 4th year class gives literacy. The best method for ascertaining wastage would be to trace the number of pupils who leave school before reaching the class which is supposed to give them literacy. But in the absence of such detailed statistical data, one has to rely upon rough and ready methods based upon the data that are available in official reports.

Two methods for ascertaining the measure of wastage in primary schools in India may here be considered in detail. Wastage, it may be repeated, represents the percentage of pupils who fail to acquire literacy after joining a primary school.

The first method is based on a comparison of Census figures of literacy and statistics given in Educational Reports (somewhat on the lines of the method used by Sir Henry Sharp, *vide* page 44).

In 1922 there were in schools in British India (excluding Burma) approximately 45.4 lakhs of pupils of ages 5-10.<sup>1</sup> From 1922 to 1931, 9 per cent. of them died leaving alive, in 1931, 41.3 lakhs of persons of ages 14-19. The Census of 1931 showed that in that year there were in British India (excluding Burma) 24.4 lakhs of literates of ages 15-20. Disregarding the slight difference in age between the persons representing the numbers 41.3 and 24.4 lakhs, it is found that out of 41.3 lakhs persons living in 1931 who were in schools nine years ago, 24.4 lakhs were recorded as literates. The wastage thus comes to 41 per cent.

Figures of pupils of 5-10 in 1921 are available for Bombay and hence the slight difference of age mentioned above does not exist in the case of Bombay figures. Calculating on the above lines it is found that the wastage in Bombay comes to 39 per cent.

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from tables on pp. 64-65 and p. 80 of Vol. II of Progress of Education in India, 1917-22.



The second method which can give us an approximate idea about wastage is based upon the percentage of pupils in each class to the total in any one year. The following were the figures for British India (including Burma) for 1934-35:

	No. on Roll (000)	Percentage
Class I	5241	51
Class II	2230	21
Class III	1675	16
Class IV	1206	12
	10,352	100

This shows that 12 pupils are reading in the 4th class out of 100 pupils in the first four classes. Assuming for the sake of argument that a pupil becomes literate only by reading in the 4th year class in an unwasteful system of education in which there is no retardation, there ought to be 25 pupils in each of the four classes. This means that if there were 25 pupils in the 4th year class instead of 12, the system would be perfect. Instead of 25 pupils there are 12 in the 4th year class. Thus the system is 48% sound and 52% wasteful. In the above calculations it has been assumed that the 4th year class gives literacy. In a previous chapter an attempt has been made to prove that the statistics of the whole of British India show that the completion of the 3rd year class gives literacy. On this assumption the following is the percentage of pupils in each of these classes:

	No. on Roll (000)	Percentage
Class I	5241	57
Class II	2230	24
Class III	1675	19
	9146	100

In an unwasteful system of education there ought to have been 33.3 per cent. children in the 3rd year class, but the figure is 19. The wastage, therefore, here comes to about 43 per cent. In basing the calculations on the figures of any one year, the possibility of any complications that may creep in on account of 'repeaters' is eliminated. So also the diminution of numbers from class to class due to natural causes is excluded.

In the above calculations the present system of Indian education has been compared to an ideal one; but no system can attain the ideal. A reasonable elimination of numbers from class to class is natural owing to reasons such as death, sickness, mental incapacity, etc. If 90% of the pupils in each class go up to the next class, it can safely be said that the system is a sound one. If the present system is compared with a system where 90% promotions are secured, the wastage in a four-class system would be 43% and in a three-class system 37%.

The first method gives wastage at 41 per cent., while the second places it at 43 per cent. In any case wastage in Indian primary schools from the point of view of acquisition of the Census standard of literacy need not be taken as being above 50 per cent. It is somewhere nearer 40 than 50. And yet when the question of wastage is discussed in official reports, its percentage is often put down at a figure which is about 80. Bad as the system is, it is submitted that it is not as bad as it is made out to be. The situation is not hopeless. It is amenable to improvement.

Although there may be difference of opinion as regards a quantitative measurement of wastage in the primary schools in India, there is no doubt that the wastage exists on a considerable scale. And unless it is either minimised or eliminated, the output of literates through the agency of primary schools will always remain smaller than what it ought to be.

## CHAPTER VII

### STAGNATION

The problem of 'wastage' is most intimately connected with what is called 'stagnation' which means "the retention in a lower class of a child for a period of more than one year".<sup>1</sup> Of all the causes that lead to wastage the most potent is the inability of a pupil to secure promotion to a higher class after attending the class for one year. What is the numerical measure of this stagnation? The following table contains the relevant information for the Bombay Presidency for the ten years 1922 to 1931. Similar figures for other Provinces are not available.

**BOMBAY PRESIDENCY (including Sind)**  
1922 to 1931

Class	Total no. of pupils on roll (000)	Total no. of pupils promoted (000)	Percentage
1st year ...	3349	1481	44
2nd year ...	1716	1017	59
3rd year ...	1460	831	57
4th year ...	1148	666	58
Total	7673	3995	52

It will be seen from the above table that during the ten years 1922 to 1931, the schools in the Province detained about half the pupils.

<sup>1</sup> Hartog Committee Report, p. 47.

Similar figures for the Etawah District in the U. P. are available for the year 1928.<sup>1</sup>

Class	Total on roll	Passed	Percentage
1st year ...	9163	3057	33
2nd year ...	3824	2563	67
3rd year ...	2598	2142	82
4th year ...	1901	1524	80
Total	17486	9286	53

The Baroda State Annual Educational Reports contain similar figures; the percentages for 1923-24 are given below :

Class	Roll	Passes
I ...	100	31
II ...	100	47
III ...	100	44
IV ...	100	50
Average	100	40

The position regarding promotions in schools in some other countries may now be considered.

The Government of the Philippine Islands appointed a Commission of distinguished educationists to survey the system of education prevailing in the Islands. The Commission issued their Survey of the Educational System of the Philippine Islands in 1925. They found the following

<sup>1</sup> An Educational Survey of a District—Chaturvedi, p. 176.

percentages of promotions in the primary schools of the Islands:

Grade (Class)	Percentage of Promotions <sup>1</sup>
I	80
II	70
III	53
IV	50
(Average for 4 classes, 67)	

The Commission were so much struck by these figures that they recorded their strong disapproval of the whole system which allowed such a state of things to exist in the schools. They say: "The story of progress of pupils through the elementary grades is the story of 'failure', the story of non-promotions. *Schools are established in order that children may be taught, not that they may be failed.* The community and the nation build buildings, hire teachers and administrators, and finance equipment, libraries, and laboratories in order that a generation of young people may be educated and prepared for useful living".<sup>2</sup>

"One of the most effective single measures of administrative efficiency of a school system is the percentage of failure. Schools are created for the purposes of teaching children. Daily records of achievement, examinations, and marking systems, schemes for classifying and promoting children are merely administrative devices for economical handling of pupils in large masses. They have become necessary appurtenances of a system of schools because modern education is 'mass education'; the spread of democracy over the world has made impossible the individual instructions of pupils."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Survey, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

"Can this administrative situation be condoned? It is the unqualified judgment of the Commission that it cannot. That an adequate defence can be found for any school system that 'fails' more than 10 per cent. of its pupils is extremely doubtful."<sup>1</sup>

"Before leaving this question we should face squarely the following issue: Should there be any 'failures' at all in a school system—failures in the sense that children must repeat the work of a grade or a considerable part of it? The answer of the Commission is 'No'. There is no justification for causing pupils to do over again the work of a grade. If hundreds of thousands of pupils cannot 'pass' the course of study set up by the Central Bureau, a fair reply of pupils and communities to the present attitude is 'change the course of study'. That courses of instruction are made to fit children and not the reverse is a truism of school organisation. Hundreds of thousands of boys and girls are 'failing' annually. Hundreds of thousands are marking time by passing through the mechanical routine of a memoriter education. There is an enormous wastage of school funds; there is a parallel wastage of human energy."<sup>2</sup>

".....as measured by practices in many other countries, particularly in the case of promotions, much remains to be done. The extraordinary rate of failures indicates serious maladjustment within the system and constitutes a grievous waste of public funds and the energies of children."<sup>3</sup>

Lastly a very pertinent remark may be quoted: "Children should not be allowed to repeat school grades indefinitely. Repetition does them little good; it does others much harm. *Children are frequently promoted when not prepared*."<sup>4</sup>

The last sentence in the above quotation deserves to be seriously considered as food for thought by those who

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33 (author's italics).

attach undue importance to examinations and consequent promotions in a system of mass education.

Somewhat extensive quotations have been given above from the Survey because they contain weighty words of a Commission of distinguished American educationists headed by Dr. Paul Monroe and they should convey to Indian teachers and administrators a message which if taken to heart will undoubtedly transform the whole field of mass education.

'Failing pupils' seems to have been a characteristic tendency of the educational administration of this country practically from its very inception. For instance, when the first Matriculation examination was held in Bombay, the then D.P.I., Mr. Howard, was an examiner for English. He proudly declared that he had failed every candidate who had committed *three* palpable mistakes of spelling or grammar in the English paper.<sup>1</sup> With the passage of time, failing pupils has now grown into a veritable tradition. In old days the view was often expressed that every pupil who entered the 1st year class was a potential matriculate, if not a graduate, and at every rung of the ladder he must be very firmly set up before he is allowed to go up. Whatever may be the value of this view, it did not matter much so long as the schools catered mostly for the 'classes'. Now that the 'masses' are coming to schools the outlook must be entirely changed. In fact it is the first principle of mass education that every pupil who enters the school should be enabled to go from class to class in the scheduled time. Every part of the administrative machinery must be made to serve this most fundamental principle.

But this is no easy task in India. A new mentality has to be created. The greatest obstacle will be the conservatism of teachers. They think in terms of 'efficiency', as they understand it. They remember their own days and how their own teachers handled the problem of promotions. This they do and will do, not because they are hard-hearted, but because they have never been trained to think about

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<sup>1</sup> Report of D.P.I., Bombay, 1859-60, p. 39.

the larger issues of mass education and mass literacy. It is likely that some members of the supervising staff will ridicule the idea of easy promotions. All these forces must be counted and effective measures will have to be taken to counteract any tendencies to adhere to the old order of things in the matter of promotions, especially in the primary stage where the children of the masses form the great bulk. It is certain that this reform in mass education is imperative and no time must be lost in bringing it about, if the masses are to be made literate quickly and cheaply through the agency of schools. Compulsory education alone without a system of liberal promotions will give little help to the solution of the problem of mass education.

The question naturally arises whether unprepared pupils are to be promoted to higher classes. The answer to this is already supplied by the Philippines Commission when they say: "Children are frequently promoted when not prepared".<sup>1</sup> In a land which is examination-ridden and which is steeped in the traditions of 'failing pupils', it is unwise, of course, to preach that pupils should be promoted even though unprepared. Even so, however, in order to achieve the aim of mass literacy, a way out of this *impasse* has to be found. This could be done as shown below by adapting the needs of the examination to the conditions of schooling obtaining in each school.

Suppose there is a one-teacher school where the teacher has to teach, say, four or five classes simultaneously. If the State finds it necessary to keep such a school, then it is its duty so to adjust the curriculum, the time-table and the methods of teaching, that an average pupil with average attendance and application, would be promoted to a higher class. It is indeed unwise to detain him in the same class because he was not able to finish a particular course of instruction which was originally chalked out for a class taught by one teacher in charge of that class only. Further, if the pupils come from homes where they cannot get adequate facilities for regular attendance, they must not be made to suffer by detention because of the handicap

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<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 33



imposed on them by unavoidable economic conditions. Primarily the whole system of schooling in a locality must be adjusted to the needs of each locality, small or big, care being taken that the pupils do not suffer by detention because the conditions of schooling were such as not to enable an average boy to finish the course prescribed for one year. If he is not able to finish the prescribed course, it should be changed into an easier one, and if still he is not able to finish it, it should be made easier still.

Our traditions are, however, different. The prescribed curricula are treated as sacrosanct. In this connection the following observations of the Philippines Commission are very apposite: "The curriculum has the appearance of being made for the teachers and supervisors and not by them. This feeling finds corroboration in their practice in literally following in details and in their hesitancy to attempt any modifications of its prescriptions. The curriculum seems to be something handed down from above, complete and unchangeable until authoritatively revised". They further add: "We were led to feel at times that any attempt to do anything progressive was more often punished than rewarded".<sup>1</sup>

The statistics of some of the countries which are now at a high stage of educational advancement show that in spite of defects in schooling, even in the early stages of their evolution, they maintained a high percentage of promotions. Classes were large and teachers mostly untrained and yet these factors did not affect the progress of the pupils from class to class.

Promotions on a low scale lead to several undesirable results, especially in a country like India where the economic conditions of the masses are unsatisfactory. Owing to poverty they are not inclined to spare their children for schooling, and if they do so, in most cases, they find that their children stagnate in the same class for two or even

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<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 229.

more years. They are, therefore, disgusted with the situation, and withdrawal of the children from schools quickly follows. To the children themselves there is nothing more disheartening than being made to repeat the same lessons for a year or two. They lose interest in schooling and gradually drift away from it.

In this connection, the Philippines Commission say: "For another year 32 per cent. of the entire pupil body were required to work the same arithmetical problems, to read the same books, to spell the same words,.....as in the preceding years. That the educational value accruing from this distaste of scholastic work is practically nil can be safely predicted".<sup>1</sup>

A promoted child not only goes to school cheerfully, but his parents also learn to have faith in the school and, in nine cases out of ten, he will make up any deficiency that might have remained in his attainments. A detained child, on the other hand, is a potential enemy of the school, in addition to being a source of disappointment to his parents.

Mr. S. N. Chaturvedi, in his Educational Survey of a District, writes: "This huge number of failures is an almost dead loss to the school, for very few of those who have tasted failure care to return ..... Thus failure does not only mean loss of a year, but in a larger number of cases, complete stoppage of education. The disappointment caused to younger children by failure is particularly keen and the discouragement that the parent feels at finding his child detained in the class after a full year's sacrifice of work in fields seals the fate of further education of a child who has failed....."

"The remedy lies in improved teaching and liberal promotions at least in the lowest classes".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report, pp. 215-216.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 177-178.

Sir George Anderson, in his *Progress of Education in India, 1927-32*, writes: "Full use should therefore be made of the early years of schooling and promotion should be as rapid as possible: otherwise, valuable time and money will be lost and there will be no appreciable reduction of illiteracy".<sup>1</sup> These are wise words of an eminent educational administrator who has done great service to Indian education.

To those who plead for liberal promotions a question is often asked—what about the pupils who go up to the secondary schools for their further education? Unless the pupils are thoroughly grounded in all the staple subjects of the primary course, they will not be fit for the lowest class of the secondary school. Granting that it is so, will it not be advisable to adjust the requirements of the lower classes of secondary schools so that any deficiency in the primary stage owing to liberal promotions may be made up in the secondary stage? After all, the whole school system—from primary to secondary—is a continuous process and there is no need of putting each in a separate compartment. Let the contents of education be so graduated that from the lowest class of the primary stage to the highest class of the secondary stage there is a continually richer curricula. It does not matter if a child learns a few things less in the lower primary stage and makes them up if and when he goes to higher and higher classes.

The anomalies existing in the Indian educational system are indeed beyond comprehension. The full course from the lowest primary class to the highest secondary class (Matriculation) covers a period of 12 years in Bombay; while in other Provinces it is one either of 10 or of 11 years. It cannot be said that the Bombay Matriculate is superior to the Madras Matriculate, or that a Bengal Matriculate is superior to the one from the Punjab. In the eyes of the world they are all equal. Why then is an extra sacrifice of time and money demanded from the Bombay pupil? It is difficult to offer a satisfactory explanation for this

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 143.

difference. The above illustration shows that the contents of the curricula are easily adjusted when the authorities concerned are inclined to do so. If, therefore, to secure liberal promotions, it is found necessary to lower the contents of the course of a class or classes, it would not be difficult at all to make suitable adjustments later on, so that the so-called 'efficiency' may not suffer in the long run.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIRST YEAR CLASS

The peculiarity of the Indian system of primary education is that in addition to a high percentage of failures and consequent detentions in all classes in general, the percentage of promotions is the most discouraging in the lowest or the 1st year class. This class is called 'Infants' in Bombay and the U. P. It appears that Bengal has decided to give up the nomenclature.<sup>1</sup> The following figures give some idea of this high percentage of non-promotions :

Province or State	Year	Percentage of failures in the 1st Year Class
Bombay	1927	54
Bombay	1937	50
Baroda	1924	69
U. P. (Etawah Dt.)	1928	66

These figures may be compared with those of the following two foreign countries :

Country	Year	Percentage of failures in the 1st Year Class
The Philippine Islands	1924	20
The Philippine Islands	1934	23
The Dutch East Indies	1935	19

It will be seen that the percentage of failures in India is nearly three times that of the two foreign countries.

<sup>1</sup> School Education in Bengal, 1937 (G.R. 1037 Edn.).

The root cause of the failure of Indian education to promote literacy appears to be the unsatisfactory condition from all points of view of the 1st year class. If the situation at present prevailing in this class could be improved, many other evils would automatically be eradicated and the efforts at the promotion of literacy of the masses through primary schools will not show such disappointing results. This is entirely borne out by the example of the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies where the failures in the 1st year class are about 20 per cent.; while in India, the percentage is about 60. The fact that in India failures in the 1st year class are 60 per cent. makes a world of difference in the ultimate efficiency of the schools to produce literates.

Mr. Kini observes as follows after careful statistical enquiry : "...once the pupils are promoted from the first class to the second class they tend to continue their studies till a later stage. The enormous proportion of elimination at the very threshold of our educational system is a very regrettable feature".<sup>1</sup>

The harm caused to the nation through this huge percentage of failures of the 1st year class pupils is incalculable. Some idea of it can be had from the consideration of two aspects of the problem. (1) The proportion of pupils in the 1st year class to the total number of pupils in the first four classes is very large, and hence anything that affects the working of the 1st year class seriously affects the whole system. (2) The largest number of pupils who leave school permanently before attaining literacy is from the 1st year class. Not only that, but their attainments are so meagre that practically the money and effort spent over them may be said to be altogether wasted. As Mr. Chaturvedi has observed : "Out of 100 boys admitted to the infants class, only 35.7 reach Class II. The remaining two-thirds relapse into the completest possible illiteracy and no efforts are made to check this. This is the most vital educational problem

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Educational Survey in Mysore (1927-28), Vol. I, p. 215.

before the public and the educational authorities. All other high sounding schemes can take care of themselves later on".<sup>1</sup> The same writer calculates that out of 9,163 pupils in the 1st year class, 3,664 failed and out of them only 873 appeared for the same examination in the next year. This means that 2,791 out of 3,664 who failed left school, giving a percentage of 76.<sup>2</sup>

The neglect of the infants or the 1st year class by the teacher has been noted as one of the evils of the Indian system of education since long. Sir Henry Sharp, in his *Progress of Education in India, 1912-17*, observes: "But the number and variety of subjects taken by the upper primary classes, the greater interest these subjects have for the teachers and the importance attached by inspecting officers to the attainment of senior pupils lead the teacher to devote a large proportion of his time to the higher classes. More than this, were the infants class taken for even an hour a day some progress might result".<sup>3</sup>

The Hartog Committee say: "One cause for the great wastage and stagnation in the lower classes of primary schools where there is more than one teacher is the habit of placing the lowest class in charge of the least qualified teacher. This practice has naturally resulted in the worst teaching being concentrated in the class where the most careful handling is required. The lowest class in India presents peculiar difficulties, since boys and girls are admitted at present at all ages and at all times of the year, and in consequence there is additional need for special care. In Indian primary schools, as they are at present, the maxim of 'the best teacher for the youngest children' is specially applicable".<sup>4</sup>

In a one-teacher or single-teacher school the situation is still worse. Mr. Chaturvedi writes of a single-teacher school: "...the infants class, especially, the backbone as well as the Gordian Knot of the Vernacular Education,

<sup>1</sup> An Educational Survey of a District, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> Report, p. 80.

suffers to an unbelievable degree....the single teacher has scarcely any time for the infants class which is left to grow like wild weeds in a garden".<sup>1</sup>

Quotations showing the neglect of the 1st year class not only in a single-teacher school, but even in a school with more than one teacher, can be multiplied. The question is how to improve the situation. Those who have the English system of education before their eyes naturally suggest the employment of women—trained specially for this kind of work—as the proper remedy. Mr. Richey, in his *Progress of Education in India, 1922-27*, observes: "One of the chief defects of the elementary teacher in India is his sex. Universal experience has shown that the best teacher for young children is a woman. It is rare that a man shows any real aptitude for teaching an infants class. No amount of normal school training will make up for this natural deficiency. But if the trained teacher has little success with beginners what sympathetic understanding or expository skill can be expected of the junior untrained assistant or senior pupil to whom the infants class is often entrusted?"<sup>2</sup>

The latest observation on this need of specially trained women teachers for infants is made by the D. P. I. of Bombay who has been pressing this point in a very convincing manner. In his quinquennial report for 1932-37 he says: "Most of the harm is done in the first year of a child's school life. At present there are hardly any teachers in this Province who have any knowledge or have had any training in the handling of small children. The teaching of small children is an art in itself and requires considerably more skill than the teaching of older children, and it will be found that in Europe and America classes composed of smaller children are usually put in the hands of women teachers. Experience will, therefore, point out to the need

<sup>1</sup> *An Educational Survey of a District*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 116.



of more women teachers with a good educational background behind them who have been trained specifically for infant work".<sup>1</sup>

The gist of the above remarks is that in order to improve the teaching of infants, it is necessary to employ specially trained teachers and particularly women. The remedy suggested is excellent. But is it practicable? The practicability of the remedy must be examined from two points of view, financial and social. In Bombay there are about 35,000 teachers in primary schools, and at least one out of three must be in charge of infants. To train 12,000 teachers in special methods of 'infant work' is a task beyond the resources of Bombay which has not got today even 50 per cent. ordinary trained teachers. The remedy, therefore, will not come within the realm of the practicable in the near future. The suggestion that these infants' teachers should be 'trained women', and trained for that particular work, is not only impracticable but also impossible. Even today in Bombay many girls' schools and classes are in the hands of male teachers. Besides, the conditions of living in villages which would have the bulk of the infants in schools are quite unfavourable to women teachers being posted to such schools. Under these handicaps the remedy of training women teachers 'with a good educational background' specially for infant work seems to be of no practical value.

While fully appreciating the value of training for teachers in general, it is difficult to subscribe to the view that most of the defects of Indian education are to be laid at the door of want of sufficient number of trained teachers. "It is not safe to assume that a teacher without technical preparation will necessarily be a poor teacher; nor that every person with the best training yet devised will be an effective teacher."<sup>2</sup> Many nations have gone ahead with mass education and many more are doing so today in spite of the paucity of trained teachers. The supply of an

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Philippines Educational Survey, p. 406.

adequate number of trained teachers is mainly a question of finance. It is, however, worth noting that England had not even 50 per cent. trained teachers in her schools during the most important years of expansion of mass education, 1870-1900.<sup>1</sup>

Today nearly 80 per cent. of the teachers in the elementary schools in England are women. The English system of employing women teachers in preference to men has grown not only on educational but also on financial grounds, a female teacher's remuneration being 80 per cent. of that of a male.<sup>2</sup>

Without being unmindful of the good that will accrue if the 1st year class pupils are put under the charge of the best available teachers, one cannot forget that in Indian schools only half the teachers are 'trained'.<sup>3</sup> In the year 1932 there were in British India roughly two lakhs primary schools of which half were single-teacher schools; while the total number of teachers was 3½ lakhs, each multi-teacher school thus having 2.5 teachers teaching 3 to 5 classes. Assuming that the distribution of the trained and untrained teachers is even in all types of schools, on an average there will be 1.25 trained teachers per multi-teacher school. It will thus be seen that there is little scope for carrying out the suggestion that the best trained teacher be given to the lowest class. In cities and towns where there are schools, each with many teachers, it is possible to divert a good trained teacher to the lowest class. But taking India as a whole, the suggestion of giving trained teachers to the lowest classes cannot be enforced on a large scale until the percentage of trained teachers is greatly increased. This again leads to financial difficulties of an almost insuperable character. If, therefore, the instruction of the lowest class is to be improved within the present financial resources, recourse will have to be had to

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<sup>1</sup> Mass Education in India—Parulekar, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, Vol. I, p. 151.

ways and means such as, restricting the admission to the lowest classes to a specific period of the year only, raising of the age of admission, etc. These reforms, if enforced, are bound to effect remarkable improvement in the teaching of the lowest class. Other suggested remedies, however attractive and sound, will not help because of financial and other considerations. Whoever may be the teacher of the 1st year class, it is essential that he should devote at least a couple of hours' undivided attention a day to that class.<sup>1</sup> This class is often looked upon as a gathering place for youngsters to accustom them to the school and not for actual instruction. Mr. Mason Olcott very aptly says in reference to the infants' class: "Often they are taught nothing at all except to sit motionless and speechless, and thus 'get used to school'! Several Provinces appropriately call the class, where they acquire such habits of dull apathy, the infant (that is, non-speaking) class. Nothing is expected of them either by the teacher or the parents".<sup>2</sup>

This is indeed a very sad state of things. The supervising officer must make it clear to the teacher that the merit of his work will much depend upon the results of the 1st year class. The final result of the work will have to be judged by the number of pupils promoted. If a child who attends for a prescribed minimum number of days fails to be promoted, the reasons must be very carefully scrutinized. In fact the whole machinery of inspection and teaching must be so adjusted that all eyes must be on the 1st year class. Hitherto it was the practice to concentrate attention on the upper classes, but now the 1st year class must claim it. If these simple measures which require no additional expenditure are carried out, there is no doubt that a great change for the better will come over the educational system.

The question of the curriculum of the 1st year class has not been considered here. Important as it is, it does not matter what the curriculum is, so long as the folly is

<sup>1</sup> Report, D.P.I., Bombay, Vol. I, 1917-22, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Better Village Schools, p. 119.

not committed of prescribing a curriculum which cannot be reasonably completed by the teacher and the class of a particular school within the time allotted and under conditions of schooling obtaining in that school.

There is hardly a country in the world which has not recognised the imperative necessity of restricting school admissions to the 1st year class to certain times in a year. In fact, mass education will not be successful unless the 1st year class children are admitted only once a year. Admissions made twice a year are bad enough, but more frequent ones are simply disastrous. The system of primary education introduced under the British Administration has, from its inception, been defective in this respect. It was in the Progress of Education in India, 1912-1917, that reference to this evil was made for the first time. The Report says: "But the irregularity of making admissions brings it about that the class (first year class) contains children at every different stages of attainments".<sup>1</sup> The Progress for 1917-22 prominently makes mention of this defect: "There is no fixed date of admission. Pupils come in month by month according to caprice or the influence of their horoscopes. The lowest class, a class in which numbers are high, is a collection of little groups each at a different stage of advancement".<sup>2</sup> The Hartog Committee Report says: "The lowest class in India presents peculiar difficulties; since boys and girls are admitted at present at all ages and at all times of the year, and in consequence, there is additional need for special care".<sup>3</sup> The Committee also refer to the attempts made by Mr. H. Dippie to introduce "the salutary innovation of confining school admission to a single month of the year". Mr. Dippie seems to be the first officer in India who tried to combat this great evil in actual practice. Others saw it before him, but it appears that they simply stated the evil and left it for others to apply remedies. Mr. Dippie rightly called the 1st year class "a stagnant pool". It is not known how far Mr. Dippie succeeded in getting better results. The question

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> p. 80.

is now coming into prominence and the official attempts to restrict admissions to a specific period of the year are steadily gaining fruit.

It is indeed a good sign that in some of the recent reports on Educational Reconstruction, the importance of restriction of admissions is duly emphasized. Mr. R. S. Weir, in his Report on Primary Education in U. P., says : "Yet another cause of inefficiency is the admission of pupils in the lower form twice yearly. The system which was an advance on the previous system (when no restriction was observed) is still too liberal. Inevitably, it creates confusion. I recommend that admission be limited to the months of July and August each year and that subsequent admissions, except in the case of transfers, be rigorously banned. Without such a safeguard, the teacher never can know where he is with his class. With it, he is assured of a compact body which he may reasonably teach as a whole".<sup>1</sup>

The Report of the Education Reorganization Committee of Burma (1936) makes a distinct recommendation in this matter : "Enrolment should be limited rigidly to a period of 60 days from the date of the official opening of the school year.....subject to the proviso that where conditions permit a Local Education Authority may fix a period of less than 60 days for enrolment".<sup>2</sup>

The Vocational Training Committee of Bombay in their recent (1938) Report recommend : "We are of opinion that fresh admissions to the lowest class, i.e., to Standard I (at present classed infants), should ordinarily be made within two months from the date of the beginning of the school year".<sup>3</sup>

Although this evil was recognized as far back as in 1912, and in spite of the consensus of opinion for its removal by various Educational Committees, Departments of Education do not appear to have made any serious efforts to eradicate

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<sup>1</sup> p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> p. 14.

it, because it is only in recent years that rules have been framed in some Provinces restricting admissions to once a year only. Even the Rules under the various Compulsory Education Acts have not taken into account this great evil. That so obvious and eminently desirable a reform should take so long in being implemented merely shows how apathetic has been the Educational Administration in this country.

## CHAPTER IX

### AGE OF ADMISSION TO SCHOOLS

In a system of mass education, it is very necessary to admit such children only as have attained a particular age. A Compulsory Education Act has to provide for the lower and upper age limits of compulsion. From the year 1918 onwards all the Indian Provinces have passed Compulsory Education Acts. The lower age limit for compulsion is 6, although the Punjab Act allows the option of making it 7, with the previous sanction of Government. The upper age limit is 11 in all cases.

But the fixing of an age limit for compulsion between 6 and 11 does not prevent children below and above those ages from attending schools. It only means that a child cannot be legally forced to join a school before he is 6 and he cannot be legally allowed to leave school before he is 11, unless, of course, he has completed the minimum standard of education which gives him exemption. Children are allowed to join schools today even when they are below 5.

The following table gives the percentage of pupils in the 1st year class according to age in British India :

Age	Percentages				
	1912	1917	1922	1927	1932
Below 5	5	5	4	4	3
5 - 6	21	20	17	17	22
6 - 7	24	24	24	25	27
Above 7	50	51	55	54	48

From the above table it is seen that although there is marked improvement in the position so far as children under 5 are concerned, there is no such change in the next

age-group, *viz.*, between 5 and 6. One out of every four children in the 1st year class is below 6, which is the minimum age fixed for admission to school under the Compulsory Education Acts.

The question may be raised as to why admission to school below a certain age-limit should be restricted. Is it not harsh to say 'no' to a child, if he comes to school by himself when he is, say, 4 years old? The parents want him to go to school. Why should he not be allowed? Some even assert that a rate-payer has a right to get his child admitted to school irrespective of his age.

One comprehensive answer can be given to these questions: "Modern education is 'mass education'. The spread of democracy over the world has made impossible the individual instructions of pupils".<sup>1</sup> There was a time when education was meant only for those who sought it. Now it is to be given to all whether they want it or not. Hence came the idea of compulsion. In the old order of things the numbers to be educated were small. Moreover, tuition fees defrayed a substantial share of the expenditure. Again, most schools were then private schools and as the people sent their children of their own free will, they willingly bore a share of the expenditure. In the new order of things, on the other hand, children are actually compelled to go to school. The numbers are swelling and in India they have still to swell four times. Compulsion has necessitated the abolition of fees, because it is believed that it is not fair that you should compel a parent to send his child to school and at the same time ask him to pay for the schooling. The State share of expenditure is rapidly increasing. The sheer weight of numbers is forcing upon the State the necessity of maintaining larger classes. The teacher has no time to look after the wants of each child separately and individually. He has to teach the class as a whole often consisting of 40 to 50 children and sometimes an equal number spread over four or five classes. Under these conditions of schooling, which the State is forced to adopt

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<sup>1</sup> Philippines Educational Survey, p. 215.



owing to limitations of its finance, it is imperative that the age of a child admitted to the 1st year class should be such as would enable him to profit by the kind of instruction imparted in the schools maintained at the expense of the State. If the physical and mental development of the child has not rendered him fit to receive the instruction imparted to the class as a whole, his presence in the school will be of no profit to him, but it will hamper the progress of others. A modern State catering for mass education can hardly afford to maintain schools where very young children requiring individual care and attention can be profitably instructed.

India has adopted the lower age-limit of compulsion at 6. Whether that should be so will be discussed later. In the meanwhile, it is necessary that a rigid ban should be placed on the admission of children below that age to schools maintained free by the State. Such children can very well go to fee-paying schools if they can afford to pay for their education. But schools financed wholly from public funds must be reserved for only those who can profit by the methods and conditions of instruction which the State can afford to maintain in such schools from time to time. In spite of this imperative necessity of restricting admission to pupils above a particular age, it is seen that 25 per cent. of the children in the 1st year class are below that age. It is not known what proportion of them is in private schools, but it can be presumed that most of them are in schools maintained by the State or mostly with the help of the State. Admission of immature pupils leads to waste and the extent of such waste cannot be small where the number of pupils below the age of 6 comes to 25 per cent. of the total number of pupils in the 1st year class. Besides, there is also another economic aspect of the question. The 25 per cent. of pupils below 6 who are today attending primary schools in India, are not only absorbing 25 per cent. of the State's expenditure on the 1st year class with less profit to themselves and thus causing great waste, but they are keeping out of school an equal number of pupils of ages 6 and above. If they are kept waiting for a year or so, it will be possible to make room for an equal number of

children of 6 and above. Such children have a greater claim on public funds, and the money spent on them would yield better results.

In most countries where compulsory education is enforced, children are not admitted to the State schools until they attain the prescribed age. In Japan, for instance, where the lower age-limit is 6, to prevent over-enthusiastic parents from making their children commence education at too early an age, a strict rule rigidly enforced is laid down that no child who is under 6 years of age is to be admitted to a public elementary school. Again, in countries where compulsory education has not yet been introduced owing to financial difficulties, such a rule has also been adopted for the better utilization of educational funds. For instance, in the Philippines a child is not admitted to a State school unless he is 7 years old and the rule is strictly enforced.

Britain's long and intimate contact with India has been responsible for transplanting to the Indian soil certain educational ideas suited perhaps to the conditions in England, but entirely unsuited to the conditions prevailing in this country. The British admitted children below the prescribed age-limit (5) to schools because they could afford it. Later on, however, the British had to give option to the Local Authorities to refuse admissions below 6.<sup>1</sup> Yet young children do attend schools to some extent<sup>2</sup> and the British nation has to make special provision for such very young children to be taught under conditions of schooling where they can profitably be looked after. This again they could do because they could command the necessary funds. In India, the British administrators permitted very young children to attend schools perhaps because they thought it was a good thing after the British fashion. They even styled the lowest class as 'Infants' after the British practice and further divided it into 'Junior Infants' and 'Senior

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<sup>1</sup> Mass Education in India—Parulekar, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> About 11 per cent. of the pupils in 'Infants' were of ages below 5 in 1936 (Year Book of Education, 1938, p. 45).

Infants'. Years passed before the idea of mass education arose in this country. It is now realised that the British practice of admitting very young children will not work in a poor country like India. But here again the force of tradition has exerted itself. The Indian people do not respond to the advice of not sending very young children to schools, having been themselves brought up in contrary traditions.

People who send their children at a very young age (below 6) to schools do so with several motives. A few there are who may be anxious to see their children initiated into education at an early age so that they may complete their education early and enter life with a distinct advantage. But such persons would be themselves educated and could afford to make suitable provision for the early schooling of their children in schools where special provision is obtained and where the State spends nothing or contributes a small portion of the expenditure. A large number of people who are anxious to send their children very early to schools do so with the desire of keeping away the children from creating 'mischief' at home. Whether it is proper to fritter away public money for ensuring 'peace and quiet' in the homes of these people is a question which the State must seriously consider. There is a third section of the people who wish to use the school as a *creche*—a place where they can safely deposit their youngsters while they are at work. In this connection Mr. R. S. Weir writes: "Where there is a school, there is supervision and shelter for a small boy still unable to earn much who can be safely stowed away with the master while his parents go out to the fields. The school is a *creche*".<sup>1</sup> While these people deserve our sympathy we cannot allow them to use the school for a purpose for which it is not maintained. It is simply waste of public funds which are so insufficient. "The admission of boys under six years of age should be definitely discouraged. Little is gained by sending children to school prematurely."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report on Primary Education in the U. P. (1934), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

The Burma Education Reorganization Committee are most emphatic on this question. They want to prevent parents from entering a wrong age to gain early admission. They recommend : " Children who have not completed six years of age should not be enrolled and should be excluded, without exception, from the class rooms. Birth certificates should be called for. When they are not available and a Deputy Inspector of Schools is of opinion that the age of a child is under six, the child should be excluded unless the guardian is able to satisfy the Deputy Inspector of Schools that the child has completed 6 years of age ".<sup>1</sup>

The main argument in support of the exclusion of children under 6 is that they are not ripe physically and mentally for the kind of instruction that is possible to be given in a school imparting mass education. But there is another ground on which exclusion of young children from the 1st year class can be advocated. Sir George Anderson says : " Most reports refer to the neglect of children in the infants class and point out that this class, composed as it usually is of pupils of varying ages and attainments, is often unmanageable. The first reform would be to ensure that pupils join school at the same time in the year and that, as far as possible, they are of the same age ".<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that a teacher's work is very much facilitated, and it produces far better results, if he has to handle a class composed of pupils of the same mental growth. This principle applies to the teaching of all the early classes, although it applies with much greater force to the 1st year class. To secure such homogeneity, it is necessary not only to exclude children below 6, but it is also necessary to exclude those who are, say, two or three years older than the six-year-old child. Such a rule exists in the Dutch East Indies and it appears that it has already had a salutary effect.

The general opinion in India as regards the lower age-limit for admission to school is that it should be 6 ; for

<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Progress of Education in India for 1927-32, p. 144.

that is the age generally prescribed in Compulsory Education Acts. Although Indian schools admit a considerable number of children below that age to the 1st year class, it may be hoped that sooner or later this harmful practice will be abandoned.

Most of the countries of the world have now adopted compulsory education and have, according to their individual needs, fixed lower age-limits for compulsion as shown below.

(1) Countries which have fixed 6 as the lower age-limit :

England (option for 5) ; France ; Germany ; Italy ; Belgium ; U.S.A. (2 States) ; Australia (4 States) ; Japan ; Mexico ; and Spain.

(2) Countries which have fixed 7 as the lower age-limit :

Sweden ; Norway ; Denmark ; Finland ; Poland ; Switzerland (6 permissive) ; Holland ; Greece ; Portugal ; Rumania ; Peru ; U.S.A. (28 States) ; Canada (3 Provinces) ; Brazil ; South African Union, Australia (3 States) ; Turkey ; Egypt ; Federated Malay States ; and Siam.

(3) Countries which have fixed 8 and over as the lower age-limit :

U.S.S.R. ; U.S.A. (18 States) ; and Canada (2 Provinces).

The above list will show that highly industrialised countries have fixed the lower limit at 6 ; while most of the agricultural countries as well as countries which are just developing or which have a scattered population have fixed it at 7 or above. In some of the latter countries, a further latitude is given to the rural population.

It stands to reason that India should not follow England and the other highly industrialised countries in the adoption of the lower age-limit. The main occupation in India is agriculture and she is a land of villages. Therefore, it is but right that India should follow in this respect countries which have a similar economic background. It will, there-

fore, be wise to fix the lower age-limit at 7 and not at 6. Where conditions demand it, it may even be 8.

It would not be venturesome to say that children below the age of 7 are not physically and mentally fit to receive education imparted to them under conditions of schooling that now obtain in the vast majority of Indian schools. If it be possible to have schools where individual attention could be given, if cheerful atmosphere and occupations that interest young children below 7 were provided under sympathetic and well-trained teachers, there would be no objection to admitting children of 6 or even of a lower age. Looking at the problem purely from the point of view of the acceleration of mass literacy, in the present economic and social conditions of the country, it seems imperative that the children to be admitted to schools must be well-developed physically and mentally to grasp what is taught to them in a class as a whole and that too within the limited time which a teacher weighed with the burden of teaching other classes can conveniently spare for them.

Those who are acquainted with the theory and practice of mental testing, know that a child acquires a certain amount of knowledge irrespective of his being in a school. Mental growth continues and it does not necessarily require the aid of a school. The school comes in for imparting traditional knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic and of other informative subjects. Children of 7 or 8 are so much mentally developed by this natural process of learning that they can learn more quickly and with greater certainty of retention the traditional knowledge given in a school than children of 5 or 6. This, of course, applies to the average child.

This view finds ample support in the testimony available in other countries of the world. A Committee of Experts in Switzerland, appointed to investigate scientifically the problem of the school-age, has come to the following conclusion: "All those competent to judge emphasized the fact that in many cases children are not yet ripe for school at the age of 6".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Year Book of Education (London), 1937, pp. 765-766.

Referring to the physical aspect of the age of admission, it is stated : " The development of the organs of the senses also is still incomplete in the six-year-old child. The eye of the child is by nature long-sighted. If then it has to adjust itself too early to close work, as in the case at school, this may give rise to derangements of the nervous system. The same remarks apply to the development of kinesthetic feeling. The six-year-old child has often insufficient command over its voluntary muscles, to the extent required by school work. This often finds expression in derangements of speech and manual clumsiness. A warning is uttered against treating early maturity as genuine intellectual ability. There is then a danger of development without sufficient maturity. A year more or less of quiet development and undisturbed growth means much ; indeed every month is important. The seven-year-old child is from every point of view superior to the six-year-old..... From the medical point of view, the age of six is, therefore, to be described as definitely too early for admission to school ".<sup>1</sup>

These views are further endorsed by Swiss Pedagogues as will be seen from the following extract : " The experience gained every year with six-year-old children confirms the fact that they are generally not yet fit for school. They tire quickly both physically and mentally and it frequently happens that a child who has started too young and has been described by its parents as very forward fails after a short time and is overtaken by other children. Moreover, in many cases, the harm done only becomes apparent later, *i.e.*, on transfer to a middle-grade school ".<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Chaturvedi, after a careful statistical study of the infant class pupils, writes : " In the infants class the group below 6.79 years is eliminated to the extent of 72.5 per cent. or about three-fourths. So that the progress of boys below seven years is extremely precarious. Of the boys between the ages 6.79 and 7.73, 54.2 per cent. or more

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

than half are withdrawn before they reach Class I (the second year class). In other words, boys less than eight years of age have a greater chance of being thrown out than reaching Class I. The minimum age of six is too young for education on a voluntary basis. It should be raised to at least eight years. The older boys fare much better in the Infants Class ".<sup>1</sup>

On the question of 'Admitting Beginners to Schools' Mr. Washburn, an American educationist, remarks: "We have conducted experiment as to the efficient time for children to begin reading and have found.....that it pays to wait until the child has reached a mental age of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  years ".<sup>2</sup>

The Indian child enters on a new phase of life when he is about 7 or 8 years old from the point of view of his physical well-being as will be seen from the following figures <sup>3</sup> :

Age	Mortality per cent.
4	2.74
5	1.93
6	1.45
7	1.15
8	0.94
9	0.83
10	0.79
11	0.81
12	0.84

This resistance to disease and death is definitely strengthened when the child is 7 years old and it continues to grow stronger from the eighth to the tenth year after

<sup>1</sup> An Educational Survey of a District, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Adjusting the School to the Child, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> Extracted from the Life-table for All-India (males) in the Census Report, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p. 173.



which it again decreases. The age period 8-10 is the best part of a child's life from the point of view of resistance to mortality. His mental vigour also grows with the physical, and, therefore, his 'education' can best be commenced between the age period 7-8. Before that age period, he is in a comparatively weak condition, both physically and mentally.

Another confirmation of this physio-psychological fact is supplied by the Hindu Scriptures, where it is laid down for guidance of parents that a Brahmin child should begin his education when he is 8 years old from the time of conception, i.e., when he is more than 7 years old. According to the ancient custom, the Brahmin boy had to devote far more time to learning than the boys of other classes ; but even so, the age prescribed was above 7. Would it not be true to say that the ancient writer of these Scriptures must have based the age of formal learning on extensive observations and experience ? The cult of learning in India among certain classes and communities has been carried on uninterruptedly from times immemorial. It would appear that it was only in the nineties of the last century when the Infants class was introduced into the Indian educational system that people began to send their children to school at ages earlier than 7 and that the practice has now grown too strong to be eradicated.

It is of interest to note here that the Zakir Husain Committee on the Wardha Scheme reiterates this ancient Indian practice in the matter of the age of admission to education : " After careful consideration, we have come to the conclusion that seven plus will be the proper age to enforce compulsion ".<sup>1</sup>

The lower age-limit prescribed for compulsion in most countries of the world and especially in those having a similar social and economic background to that of India is 7 or more. Such evidence as is available as regards the most suitable age of admission from the point of view of physical fitness and mental retentiveness also favours

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<sup>1</sup> Educational Reconstruction (Vora & Co.), p. 36 (of the Report).

an age of admission not below 7. Actual research into the problem of the proper age at which the mind of the child is sufficiently receptive points in the direction of the age of 7. Taking Indian experience purely, Mr. Chaturvedi's investigations also lead to the same conclusion. The Census mortality figures for India doubly support the claim of this age, for they conclusively show that below the age of 7 the exposure to the risk of death is very much greater. The hoary antiquity of the Indian Scriptures does not also fail to lend its support to this view. And the latest support, if further support were required, is given by the findings of the Zakir Husain Committee. In view of such conclusive evidence one cannot but come to the conclusion that for India, so far as mass education is concerned, the most suitable age of admission is 7 or above.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SINGLE-TEACHER SCHOOL

The single-teacher school is yet another important problem that figures prominently in discussions relating to Indian mass education. The magnitude of the problem can be gauged from the fact that one out of two primary schools in India today is a single-teacher school. They are confined almost wholly to villages, and as India is a land of villages the problem appears to be still more serious. In the whole of India there are more than 6½ lakhs of villages. Out of them, villages with a population of 500 and below are about 5 lakhs, with a total population of about 6½ crores, which gives an average population of 130 souls to a village. Assuming that two such villages are grouped for school purposes, they cannot between them supply more than 40 pupils (boys and girls) of school-going age. These figures clearly show that in our present financial conditions, whether one likes it or not, the single-teacher school is an inevitable necessity.

The course of Indian primary education went on placidly till about 1912 and no serious thought was given as to whether the single-teacher school had succeeded in promoting literacy. Since then the various aspects of the system have been receiving attention and evoking discussion. The problem of the single-teacher school, accordingly, received its first mention in the Progress of Education in India for 1912-1917.<sup>1</sup>

In the next issue of the Progress (1917-22), the problem did receive specific mention<sup>2</sup> under the heading 'The disheartening task of the solitary teacher' and among other things the inefficiency of the ordinary village school was attributed to "the excessive number of classes assigned to a single teacher". Here is the first definite mention of the evils of a single-teacher school. Yet the writer (J. A.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 116.

Richey) did not go to the length of condemning it wholesale. He just mentioned its defects. Thereafter the Royal Commission on Agriculture went in for a wholesale condemnation of the single-teacher school. The Commission say: "We entirely agree with those educational authorities who hold that no primary school can be efficient which has less than two teachers". After referring to the financial aspect of this question, the Commission further say: "But nothing is to be gained by failure to face the fact that a village which has a primary school with only one teacher might almost as well be without a school at all".<sup>1</sup>

The Agricultural Commission were persuaded to express this view,<sup>2</sup> it appears, from what they heard about the Punjab where a policy of discouraging the growth of lower primary schools had been going on for some time, with a view to accelerating the growth of a six-class lower middle school or an eight-class upper middle school. The Commission were informed that "a marked improvement in the standard of primary education had been effected in the Punjab" by the adoption of the policy. Now improvement in the standard of education may mean one of the two things: increase in the rate of literacy or increase in the number of graduates of the six-year and eight-year class schools. If the latter is the meaning of the expression "improvement in the standard of primary education", certainly the Punjab deserves praise; but if the Punjab means by that expression that she has effected improvement in the rate of increase in literacy, the matter is very much open to doubt. The literacy of the Punjab, as of other Provinces, as recorded in the Census Reports, has hardly anything to do with the number of pupils that may be attracted to the upper primary classes. The increase in literacy will entirely depend upon the number of pupils the Punjab will be able to promote from the lower classes to the 3rd year class, or at the most, to the 4th year class and to keep them there for a year. If the Punjab be of the opinion that she would rather have less ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 525.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 526.

literate, but more of 'better' literates, one would have nothing to say. But the Punjab cannot add to its literacy by neglecting a rapid increase in the 3rd or 4th year class pupils by discouraging the growth of a lower type of school just to foster that of schools with upper classes. The Punjab Census Report of 1921 contains the following pertinent observation: "Thus while extra-scholastic literates below 20 have decreased by 19,000 persons, consequent on the closing down of many private educational institutions during the decade, there has been a very slight increase in the numbers of extra-scholastic literates of all ages. The result suggests that the efforts of the Department of Education to increase the literacy of the Province have been almost completely nullified by the diminution in the private educational enterprise".<sup>1</sup>

The opinion of the Agricultural Commission regarding the single-teacher schools aroused keen dissatisfaction about them. The Hartog Committee which followed practically repeated the view of the Agricultural Commission, though it did so in more cautious terms. The Committee said: "It may be that, in favourable circumstances, with a good teacher trained in methods of plural class teaching, a school of this type serves a useful purpose, but we cannot think that there is much promise of effective progress in a system which depends so predominantly on schools of this type. A teacher who is untrained and of meagre qualifications and who can obtain little or no assistance from the inspecting staff, cannot be expected single-handed to teach several classes with a large number of pupils, very unequally distributed among these classes".<sup>2</sup>

The Progress of Education in India for 1922-27 was published simultaneously with the Report of the Hartog Committee and it also lent its support to the views of the Commission and the Committee. It says: "One of the major causes of the wastage and stagnation is the extremely large number of schools particularly in rural areas

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 293-294.      <sup>2</sup> Report, pp. 61-62.

which have only one teacher in charge not merely of a large number of classes but of a large number of pupils in each class".<sup>1</sup>

This powerful condemnation of the single-teacher school proved infectious and "practically every (Provincial) report condemned the single-teacher school which was often an extravagance and usually ineffective".<sup>2</sup> This is the position where the single-teacher school stands today in official and non-official circles.

The Progress of Education for 1922-27 and for 1927-32 reveal a series of struggles put up by some of the Provinces to get rid of single-teacher schools or at least to lessen their number. But again and again the struggle had to be given up, in most cases for financial reasons, and in others, owing to opposition from the public. It appears that the position has remained unchanged since the Agricultural Commission recorded their memorable condemnation of the single-teacher schools nearly 10 years ago. This is not surprising because those who advocate their abolition or amalgamation and consolidation have failed to visualise their indispensable place in the framework of the Indian educational system. The right approach to the problem is to mend these schools rather than to end them. This view is supported by Messrs. Richey and Subba Rao as will be seen from the following quotations. Mr. Richey says: "Now if these statements are true, we may well despair of the future of rural education in India; for nothing is more certain than that if education is ultimately to reach the more backward and sparsely inhabited tracts, it must be by means of the single-teacher schools, no other type is economically possible. But, of course, these statements are very exaggerated. We have evidence enough in the thousands of good single-teacher schools in the United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa. I have inspected a number of such schools in South Africa, and more, I have visited many good single-teacher schools in India

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, Vol. I, p. 145.

itself; still no one will deny that such teachers are set a bad task".<sup>1</sup>

Mr. N. S. Subba Rao, the then D. P. I. of Mysore, in his Annual Report for 1933-34, recognises in unmistakable terms the importance of these single-teacher schools in the Indian educational system. After referring to the U. S. A., where even today nearly 40 per cent. of the primary schools are single-teacher schools, he says: "If this is the condition of the things in a country so rich and so well provided with excellent means of communications as the United States of America, any scheme of reorganization and consolidation in Mysore or India where single-teacher schools are numerous, must accept, for years to come, such schools as an inevitable part of the scheme of things and attempt to attain the maximum possible efficiency on the basis of such schools".<sup>2</sup>

If it is inevitable to work within the framework of the single-teacher schools, it would be pertinent to consider what reforms are necessary and desirable in order to get the best out of them. Certain reforms such as the restriction of admissions to only once a year in the 1st year class, and the prescribing of a minimum age of 7 have already been discussed.

The principal solution of the problem will, however, lie in the simplification of and less rigid adherence to the prescribed curricula. It is common knowledge that under the existing rules of the Educational Departments even in a single-teacher school the teacher is required to teach the different classes separately by strictly adhering to the curriculum for each class. *Prima facie*, therefore, if there are five classes in the school, he cannot devote more than one hour to each. An hour's instruction per class is obviously insufficient. If, therefore, there is to be more learning and more teaching, a way out would be to allow the teacher a certain amount of latitude in respect of the curriculum which will enable him to take two or more

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<sup>1</sup> Asiatic Review, January 1929, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Report, p. 35.

classes together in a common subject. While this may not be possible in all subjects, it would not only be possible but most desirable in the case of others. For instance, take the case of reading and writing. The arts of reading and writing are perfected by practice and it is in the amount of practice that the difference in the intensity and quality of such instruction lies. Suppose a book is being read by two classes simultaneously and the teacher explains things to both the classes. Although apparently both the classes seem to do the same work, the mental attitude and reaction of the 5th year class to what is being taught will be different from those of the 4th year class pupils. That is the difference in the apparent similarity of the situation.

What is advocated here already exists in most of the one-teacher schools outside India. For instance : "In some of the one-teacher schools in U. S. A., there are all the eight grades of an elementary school; and yet the work is conducted fairly satisfactorily. This is because of its better ways of organising the work. For example, the.... Experimental School.....has the following three group organization : Group A comprising the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, Group B comprising the fourth and fifth grades, and Group C comprising the first, second and third grades. The group is also flexible. Certain grades recite separately in certain subjects; and in other subjects four or five grades are combined to have joint recitations. The first grade is always a class by itself in reading".<sup>1</sup>

. What is advocated here is not the multi-class or plural-class teaching, where, for instance, the teacher sets sums to solve to class III, gives writing work to class IV, hand-work to class I, while he takes the 5th class in recitation and leaves the 2nd class in the garden (if there be one) to learn nature study or asks them to go out and play games themselves. This simultaneous handling of the five classes requires extraordinary ability on the part of the

<sup>1</sup> Re-constructing Elementary Education in Mysore—M. Siddalingaiya, pp. 149-150. (Useful hints on this subject will be found on these pages of the book under reference.)



teacher and it is too much to expect such ability from the common run of the teaching profession. It therefore follows, if immediate improvement in the situation is to be effected, that the group-system advocated above will have to be resorted to.

The system of grouping classes would be found of use not only in one-teacher schools but also in two- or three-teacher schools. On this subject, Dr. Dunn observes as follows: "The one and two teacher schools, at present the chief educational agency provided for rural children, labour under an additional and unnecessary handicap from the necessity of using curricula made for graded school organization. As long as one and two teacher schools exist, they should be provided with the curricula organized by groups to fit their practical needs, and not only by grades according to the convenience of the city graded schools".<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed most incomprehensible that in India a curriculum of a particular class, framed entirely on the supposition that there is one teacher in charge of one class for the full day and for all the working days, should be made applicable to that particular class in a single-teacher school where hardly an hour a day can be given by the teacher in charge of that class. But the fact of the matter is that this absurdity is universally practised in this country. It may be argued that the authorities do not insist on the whole of the prescribed curriculum being covered. If this is so, it is indeed a most undesirable thing. Let the authorities deal straight with the situation and tell the teacher exactly what they expect of him. The best solution of the problem would appear to be in the replacement of an imposed curriculum by one framed by the teacher himself, within certain very broad limits. It is only then that the single-teacher schools will do their work properly and contribute their due share to the educational uplift of the masses. What is wanted is an entire change in the outlook.

In the pre-British system of Indian education, the entire school was one class. There were no 'standards'.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Siddalingaiya, Op. Cit., p. 77.

Again, every single pupil had to be the tutor to one below him. In fact, the common school of the time was a mutually helping society with the teacher at the head. The single-teacher school worked well and it did impart to the children attending a sort of instruction which was enough for their wants. It is worthwhile taking the help of this old Indian system to some extent especially in some minor processes of learning.

A successful working of the group-teaching advocated here presupposes training in this method of teaching to the existing teachers. This could be arranged through vacation or refresher courses. To ensure its success it will also be necessary to provide adequately for effective supervision and guidance. No supervisor can be expected to supervise properly if he is entrusted with more than fifty one-teacher schools.

## CHAPTER XI

### DURATION OF SCHOOL LIFE

An important problem relating to mass education is the duration of school life. How long does a child stay in a school? While considering this question, the period of stay in a school must be in reference to children studying up to a certain class. If it is presumed that the 4th year class is the upper limit of the minimum primary education, children learning up to that class only must be considered. Some children may stay for 4, 5 or even 6 years, if they are detained in some classes. Others may stay for a year only; while others may have spent a year in each of the four classes. To ascertain the duration of school life, one has, therefore, to take into consideration all such cases.

The earliest attempt to determine the duration of school life of an Indian school child was made by Sir Henry Sharp in his *Progress of Education in India* for 1907-12.<sup>1</sup> In the subsequent issue of the *Progress* for 1912-17 he revised his previous method of calculation.<sup>2</sup>

His calculations were for the full course of seven years. He showed that the average length of school life was 3.8 years. If his method is applied to children in the first four classes only the figure comes to 2.8, and if applied to first three classes only it comes to 2.4 years. It is curious that in the subsequent quinquennial issues of the *Progress* no mention is made of this definite figure (3.8) of the duration of school life. The *Progress* for 1917-22 discusses the question in general.<sup>3</sup> The *Progress* for 1922-27 makes an important difference between duration of school life in general and its *effective duration*.<sup>4</sup> A child may stay in the first class for two years, in the second for two, and in

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 140 and Vol. II, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I, p. 122 and Vol. II, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. I, p. 123.

the third and fourth for one year each. Although his numerical duration of school life comes to six, his effective duration is only four. What is required, therefore, is to increase the effective duration and not merely the duration. The latest issue of the Progress (1927-32) casually discusses the question, but the remarks made are most significant as they offer an explanation of the short duration of school life.

"Owing to the poverty of the masses the length of time in which parents can afford to keep their children in school is limited. As soon as children reach an age when they become of economic value to the household they have to leave school, no matter what stage they have reached in their education. It therefore follows that, if the maximum benefit is to be received from the money spent on primary education and on the time spent by the children at school, the attendance of pupils should be as regular as possible, thereby enabling them to obtain promotion from class to class in the shortest possible time before their assistance in family duties has become of economic value."<sup>1</sup>

The method adopted by Sir Henry Sharp is based on very broad considerations and many assumptions. But recently, Mr. S. N. Chaturvedi has investigated the problem critically, basing his calculations on the cases of about 30,000 children in the Etawah (U. P.) district. His conclusions are: "Of the 30,243 cases investigated, 13,126 or 43.4 per cent. leave within a year of joining school . . . . . Those leaving before three years . . . . . amount to 76.9 per cent . . . . the average life of a boy in primary schools is only one year ten months, so that a boy spends less than two years in the school before going back to his fields and pastures. The school has demonstrated its inability to keep him for a longer time".<sup>2</sup>

With the help of figures of pupils on the roll and pupils promoted in the Bombay Presidency, the following average

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> An Educational Survey of a District, p. 184.

stay of a pupil in each of the first four classes is obtained for the year 1926-27 :

Class	Average stay of a pupil in the class (years)
I	1.5
II	1.26
III	1.36
IV	1.35

From this it may be inferred that a pupil in Bombay spends on an average—

in the 1st year class ...	1.5 years
in the 2nd " " ... (1.5+1.26)	2.76 "
in the 3rd " " ... (2.76+1.36)	4.12 "
in the 4th " " ... (4.12+1.35)	5.47 "

This table does not give the average duration of school life of a pupil, but it shows that a pupil who is able to stay in the 3rd year class for a year spends on an average more than four years in the school. It also shows that the parents of the children who are in the 2nd year class in Bombay have to keep their children in schools for nearly three years. If, therefore, proper precautions are taken to secure promotions from class to class, almost all of the children in the 2nd year class can be given effective education for three years and those in the 3rd year class, for four years. So far as Bombay is concerned, and leaving aside the pupils who leave school altogether from the 1st year class, it is not so much the unwillingness of the parent to make the necessary sacrifice that comes in the way of the child's acquiring literacy, but it is more the ineffective schooling expressed in large percentage of failures that is at fault. Those who blame the parents for their apathy will see that it is not so much the parents but the system of schooling that deserves the greatest share of blame for failure of education or 'wastage' as it is called.

It might be of interest to note here the duration of school life in some of the Eastern countries.

In the Philippine Islands: "On the average a child remains less than three years" (at school).<sup>1</sup>

Of Indo-China it is said: "The vast majority of children cannot really devote more than three years to school".<sup>2</sup>

The duration of school life of a primary school pupil in India would roughly work out between two and three years for children in the first four classes. This means that in the majority of cases an Indian parent, poor though he be, is willing to spare his child for schooling for a period of years which will not exceed three. In a poor country like India the period of compulsory education must not be far in excess of that for which the parent can spare the child for schooling. In India this period seems to be about three years. Sir George Anderson has aptly observed: "Owing to the poverty of the masses the length of time in which parents can afford to keep their children in schools is limited".<sup>3</sup>

For some other countries of the world possessing similar economic background the period of schooling for which a child is spared by the parents is also about three years as will be seen from the following: "School statistics in the Dutch East Indies, in Indo-China, in British India, in Siam, in the Philippine Islands, in the rural district of France, Italy and the U. S. (especially in the Southern and the South-Western States) show that the majority of the rural students do not go further than the third grade".<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the failure of many of the schemes of compulsory education in certain areas, small or big, may be attributed to some extent to this maladjustment between the forces used for the uplift and the economic forces which govern the life of the people with an iron hand.

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<sup>1</sup> The Survey of the Educational System of the Philippines, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1931, p. 508.

<sup>3</sup> Progress of Education in India, 1927-28, Vol. I, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1937, p. 95.

## CHAPTER XII

### NEED FOR RAPID EXPANSION

The following table shows at a glance the progress of primary education in British India during the years 1882 to 1932 :

Year	Pupils in recognised primary schools	Percentage to total population
1882	22,00,000	1.1
1902	32,00,000	1.4
1922	63,00,000	2.6
1932	94,00,000	3.3

For the sake of comparison similar figures for some countries in the East are given below :

**The Philippine Islands.**—Here the present system of education was inaugurated in 1901 only. There is no compulsory education in the Islands.

Year	Pupils in primary schools	Percentage to total population
1900	(Hardly any)	...
1901	1,50,000	1.5
1911	6,07,000	6.0
1921	9,24,000	8.0

**The Dutch East Indies.**—In this country the system of mass education was inaugurated in about 1909. Compulsion has not been introduced so far.

Year	Pupils in primary schools	Percentage to total population
1909	3,17,000	...
1912	6,23,000	1.4
1924	11,07,000	...
1935	17,87,000	2.8

**China.**—China was declared a Republic in 1912, and with the coming of the Republic the number of pupils in primary schools began to rise by leaps and bounds.

Year	Pupils in primary schools	Percentage to total population
1912	28,00,000	...
1922	66,00,000	...
1931	1,17,00,000	(about 3)

In Egypt, the rise is most remarkable. In 1928, the total number of pupils in the primary or elementary schools was about 3 lakhs and in 1938 it rose to about 10 lakhs (*vide* page 122). The population of Egypt in 1927 was 1,42,00,000.

Japan took up the question of mass education in about 1872 and within the first 6 years there was a 100 per cent. rise in the number of pupils which rose from 11,46,000 in 1873 to 23,00,000 in 1879.

In England (and Wales) also, the policy of spreading mass education was adopted by the State in about 1871 when there were in recognised primary schools about 18,00,000 pupils. In 1881 the number rose to 40,00,000. The difference, however, between England and the other countries mentioned above was this. Even in 1871 England had in schools about 8 per cent. of the population; while

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the other countries mentioned above, including Japan, had hardly one per cent. of the population in schools to begin with.

From the statistics given above one peculiarity about India, as compared with the other countries, may be noted. In no period of Indian education during the last 50 years has the expansion been as rapid as in the other countries. In Japan, within the first six years, the rise was more than 100 per cent. In China within the first decade, the rise was more than 100 per cent. In the Philippines in the first decade it was more than 400 per cent. and in the Dutch East Indies within only the first three years it was 100 per cent. The example of Korea, after its annexation by Japan in 1910, is also worth noting. From 1909 to 1919 the number of pupils rose from 16,000 to 89,000 and from 89,000 it rose in 1929 to 4,50,000, thus recording a rise of 500 per cent. during each of the two decades. These countries seem to have a firm faith in *rapid expansion* of mass education; while in India opinion seems to veer in the direction that until India can produce a fool-proof system no special effort should be made to bring about rapid expansion.

Not only the example of other countries but their educational history also shows that rapid expansion must precede all other educational reforms. India has never realised the greatest truth in mass education that slow progress is no progress at all. "Education can be so gradual as to allow the educated few to be absorbed afresh by the inertia and habits of the uninstructed mass. Education produces its best effect not when it trickles slowly but when it is rapidly universalised."<sup>1</sup> The great truth can be illustrated easily. If we want to root out weeds from a big field so as to make it cultivable, we cannot achieve our object by uprooting a weed here or a weed there each day. By the time we proceed a little, the small spots cleared will have a fresh crop of weeds and this process will be almost endless. There is another reason which demands rapid expansion.

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<sup>1</sup> The Democratic Progress—Beni Prasad, J p. 169-170.

It has been shown that in India nearly 75 per cent. of the new literates produced by schools are not directly reflected in the percentage of literacy because of the high birth and death rate. (*Vide* page 17.) Gaps rapidly created must be filled up with greater rapidity. Otherwise, progress is bound to be slow or at a standstill as at present.

It is often urged that a rapid increase in the number of pupils in schools does not necessarily mean a proportionate increase in the number of literates. This argument may perhaps hold to some extent when the number of pupils in schools is vastly increased. At present, however, even under the existing conditions of wastage and stagnation, if the numbers in schools are doubled the output of literates will also be doubled. Irrespective of other things, an increase in the enrolment is bound to result in a proportionate increase in literates. The proper policy should be simultaneously to attempt to stop wastage and to get on with rapid expansion.

A more pertinent question would be: "Granting that rapid expansion of mass education is necessary, can India afford it?" This is a question which must be faced squarely. In 1932, the total expenditure on primary education in British India was about 8 crores of rupees and the percentage of pupils in primary schools to the total population was 3.3. If 14 per cent. of the population is to be in schools as it ought to be, British India will have to spend more than four times the present amount, i.e., more than 32 crores of rupees, if the present scales of expenditure are adhered to.<sup>1</sup>

Granting that rapid expansion is a supreme necessity and that there are not at our disposal sufficient funds for such expansion, what would be the most suitable remedies to adopt?

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<sup>1</sup> Valuable suggestions on the Problem of Finance are made by Mr. Dinkar Desai of the Servants of India Society in his recent book—Primary Education in India.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE NUMBER OF PUPILS PER TEACHER

The foremost question which deserves consideration in any scheme for rapid expansion of mass education is the proportion of teachers to pupils. It is well known that in India, as also in other parts of the world, the major part of the expenditure on primary education (in India nearly 80 per cent.) is on the pay of teachers.

What is the present situation in India? In 1932, there were in the primary schools of British India 27 pupils per teacher on an average. During the 30 years 1902 to 1932, the figure has been practically the same. It may further be noted that this number (27) is the average number *on roll* and not the average of actual attendance which is necessarily smaller.

This question of the number of pupils per teacher has been authoritatively dealt with by the League of Nations' Mission of Educational Experts in their report—The Re-organization of Education in China. This report was prepared by four distinguished educational experts from four European countries: Germany, France, Poland and England. Under the heading Rational Utilization of Schools the Mission observe: "Considering the great lack of schools in China and the large numbers of children that from year to year cannot obtain access to those there are, it is astonishing what little advantage is on the whole taken of the schools and means of education actually at country's disposal. . . . . If the number of pupils to each teacher was increased from 20 to 40, then with the same means as at present it would be possible to teach not 8,785,000 pupils, but 17,570,000 children, and by raising the scale to 50, which would still be a lower figure than in many countries that lead in education, it would be possible with these very same means to teach over 22 million children".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> p. 62.

"Not less extravagant is the number of teachers in relation to the number of pupils. This is a matter of importance, as the salaries of teachers constitute the major part of the total expenditure on primary education. In China far fewer pupils fall to the share of one primary school teacher than is usual in countries where general education is more advanced. In China as a whole there are 20.3 pupils to one teacher, whereas in many countries of a high standard of education there are 2 to 3 times as many. This should mean that in the same conditions and at the same expense between 2 and 3 times as many pupils as are actually under instruction could be dealt with by the existing staffs of teachers . . . . and in the present very difficult conditions not less than 50 to 60 pupils per teacher should be taken as a basis."<sup>1</sup>

It may be asked, if the number of pupils per teacher can be increased in India so as to accommodate a greater number of pupils at no material additional cost, why has she not done this so far, or at least been advised to do so? The reply would be that the educational administrators of India have apparently not considered systems of mass education in other countries with a social and economic background similar to that of India. Not only that but they do not appear to have taken into account the conditions of English schools when in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the British Government made elementary education compulsory and resolved to push it through. It is well known that the British system of education in India, at least in the beginning, had little to do with the idea of mass education. It mainly catered to the needs of the classes and had necessarily to keep in mind the goal of high efficiency. This necessitated small numbers and curricula rich in cultural subjects. With the advent of popular Governments in India there is an urgent need of reconsideration of the policy which must yield place to one directed to cater for the needs and aspirations of the masses and not of the classes only.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81 and 83.

A striking case for the acceleration of mass education is provided by Czechoslovakia which after the Great War settled down to reorganise its educational system. It began with the rule: "One teacher is provided for a maximum of 80 pupils, two where the pupils number 81 to 160 and three teachers for more than 161". This was prescribed with the full knowledge that the number was excessive, for it was soon laid down that from 1922 the number should be brought down to 70 and from 1932 to 60.<sup>1</sup> It is quite clear that this modern State, faced with the problem of providing educational facilities to all its children, first thought about numbers and then about other things. One more example of a newly created State in Europe, the new Polish Republic, is worth noting. Before 1918 when it was under Russia, the illiteracy percentage in Poland was nearly 50. The new State took up the question of mass education seriously and the average number of pupils assigned to one teacher was put at 50.<sup>2</sup> Information about the internal organizations of other new nations is not available in greater detail; but there is no doubt that they have been shaping their educational destinies without minding the practices of their more fortunate neighbours. Adjusting the number of pupils per teacher to the economic needs of a people had been recognized to the fullest by all nations of the world, when they organised their educational systems to meet the new needs of mass education.

In the two Eastern countries—the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies—for which statistics are available, this important measure of educational administration was fully utilized from the start. The Philippines began with 80 pupils per teacher in 1906; in 1924 the number was 50 and in 1934 it was about 45. In the Dutch East Indies the figure stood in 1935 at 50. India has been maintaining

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<sup>1</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1924, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1926, p. 345.

NOTE.—A detailed statistical account of this problem—number of pupils per teacher—is given in *Mass Education in India*—R. V. Parulekar.

an average of 27 pupils per teacher for more than a generation. It is perhaps the lowest figure in the world.

The capacity of a teacher to instruct 50 pupils at a time has been authoritatively recognised in India even as far back as 1913. In the Educational Policy of Government of India issued under a Government of India Resolution of 21st February, 1913, it is laid down: "No teacher should be called on to instruct more than 50 pupils; preferably the number should be 30 or 40; and it is desirable to have a separate teacher for each class or standard".

So far as can be ascertained, this was the first official pronouncement on the problem of 'number of pupils per teacher'. Although the maximum number per teacher permitted by the Government of India Resolution is 50, the average number for the whole of British India has been 27 at least for over forty years.

The following table shows the maximum number of pupils allowed and the average number of pupils per teacher in some countries for which the relevant information is available:

Country	Maximum number allowed per teacher	Average number per teacher
England	60 (1894)	42 (1895)
Germany	80 (1896)	64 (1901)
Japan	70 (1906)	55 (1905)
Italy	60 (1932)	43 (1933)
India	50 (1913)	27 (all years)

*N.B.*—The figures in brackets indicate the year to which they relate.

In England a definite rule regarding the maximum number was laid down in 1894. Before that year the *average* number of pupils per teacher varied from 62 to 46. Thus before 1894 the maximum number allowed must have been over 70 pupils.

From what has been stated above it will be seen that the average number of pupils per teacher varies between 70 and 80 per cent. of the permitted maximum. In India, on the other hand, in spite of a lower maximum, the average is only 54 per cent. of the maximum permitted. It would thus appear that this very fundamental problem has been almost completely disregarded in building up a system of mass education in India. And assuming that that was done to ensure efficiency, the results do not seem to bear out the assumption.

It may be argued that a larger number of pupils was assigned per teacher in the countries mentioned above, because the capacity of an average teacher there was far higher than in India. That is, however, very doubtful. Even up to 1894, the percentage of trained teachers in the elementary schools of England had scarcely reached 50, the percentage which obtains in India for several years. Moreover, up to 1894, the staffs of common schools in England had a large proportion of 'pupil' teachers—young boys and girls who were just out of schools and who were kept in the schools for training and made to do almost full-time work as teachers.

At the cost of repetition it may be affirmed that unless India reorganises her system of mass education so that the average number of pupils per teacher comes to a far higher figure than what it is today, there is no hope of her being able to liquidate mass illiteracy through her schools. If India wants to advance in mass education, she cannot do so unless she follows the ways trodden by countries like England and Japan in the past or now chosen by other countries of lesser note. Financing of mass education in one of the poorest countries like India, with her teeming millions who are ever increasing in numbers, is a matter which in its magnitude stands no comparison with the problems which England, Germany or even Japan had to face in the past. To expect India to solve the problem of mass education through methods which even those prosperous countries could not afford to adopt, is nothing short of trying to achieve the im-

possible. An immediate measure of reform is that India should adopt 60 as the maximum number of pupils instead of 50 and work up the whole system of mass education in such a way that within a few years the average number of pupils per teacher will be round about 50. If this is achieved a great stride will have been taken.

This step will have two effects. In the first place it would be possible to bring to schools nearly double the number of children without much additional cost, and secondly, the way will have been prepared for future expansion for securing the goal of universal mass education, at a cost which will be somewhere double the present cost, instead of four times as it would otherwise be.

In England, almost from the introduction of compulsory education, the rules for staffing schools have been based on the consideration of the qualifications of the teachers. A larger number of pupils was entrusted to better qualified teachers than to less qualified ones. In India, on the other hand, the system is inelastic, and larger or smaller classes have to be entrusted to a teacher according to the circumstances of each school and not according to the teacher's qualification. It is, therefore, not unusual to see that a class of 40 is entrusted to an untrained teacher and one of 20 to a trained teacher. This policy is detrimental to increasing the average number of pupils per teacher on the whole. Besides, the increase in the number of trained teachers involving additional expenditure is not compensated for by a proportionate increase in the number of pupils taught. The correct policy would be to vary the number of pupils taught by a teacher according to his qualifications.

The next question that arises is whether it is possible to increase the average number of pupils per teacher to the extent advocated above. Supposing there is a two-teacher school with say 60 pupils, would it be possible in such a school to get 30 to 40 more pupils so as to give an average of 45 to 50 pupils per teacher. So long as it is the ambition of schools to have one teacher for one



class<sup>1</sup> irrespective of the number of pupils in that class, it will not be possible in most schools to have a larger average of pupils for one teacher. For it is proverbial that in Indian primary schools, except in big cities or towns, there is always a paucity of numbers in the upper classes and over-crowding in the lower ones. The prevailing practice seems to be to discourage combined teaching in higher classes, although the classes may be comparatively smaller. This is at the root of small number of pupils per teacher prevailing in Indian schools today. If it is realised that the higher a class, the less dependent it is on a teacher, such combinations should be possible so as to enable a teacher to have 50 to 60 pupils.

In this connection the Government of Bengal have recently come forward with a plan which deserves the serious attention of all who are interested in the expansion of mass education in India. In a recent Government publication (1937), *School Education in Bengal*, they have proposed to staff their schools on the following lines. Each school should ordinarily have three teachers. The average roll strength of a school shall not ordinarily exceed 135, distributed approximately as follows :

Class I	..	..	..	..	40
Class II	..	..	..	..	35
Class III	..	..	..	..	30
Class IV	..	..	..	..	30

An ordinary Indian school with such a strength is given 4 teachers; as a result, the number of pupils per teacher comes to 34. The Bengal Government propose to give such a school only 3 teachers, thus bringing up the number of pupils per teacher to 45. This is indeed a bold step and, if it is put into execution, Bengal will show a way to India towards rapid expansion of mass education.

Bombay has recently revised its rule for staffing primary schools and thus has now gone up to the maximum

<sup>1</sup> Vide the Rule in the Indian Educational Policy, 1913, quoted on page 115.

number of 50 which was laid down in the Government of India Resolution of 1913.

The Director of Public Instruction, Bombay, says in his Report for 1932-37: "According to Primary Education Rule 57 (1) the number of pupils on the rolls of a class and, if a teacher is in charge of more than one class, the total number on rolls in all such classes is not to exceed 40. In 1936, however, Government informed the Local Authorities that strict observance of this rule would not be insisted upon and that the Local Authorities would be permitted to raise the figure to 50 with the permission of the Education Inspector".<sup>1</sup>

It is further added: "This permission has not as yet been taken advantage of to any great extent". It may be urged upon the Bombay Government which has already gone so far as to change its old rule, to be so good as to permit the Local Authorities to take the initiative themselves instead of asking them to come to the Inspector for previous permission. For it is well known that situated as the Local Authorities are, they are not inclined to approach the Authorities for permission in such matters.

It must be admitted that the problem of staffing can be solved satisfactorily only if the teachers as a body are made to appreciate the effort made by the Educational Authorities to promote mass literacy. Because, without their whole-hearted co-operation, the Authorities will not easily succeed.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 106.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PART-TIME SYSTEM

An indirect method of securing the necessary increase in the average number of pupils per teacher is the system of part-time instruction. This may take various forms. The Shift System or the Double Shift System, as it is sometimes called, is one form of part-time instruction. In remote villages where the number of pupils is small, the school may be held on two or three days in the week, the teacher going to another village during the rest of the week. The object of such part-time instruction should be to entrust each teacher with 50 to 60 pupils.<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that in Soviet Russia remarkable progress has been made in reducing illiteracy both through the instruction of adults and of school children. So far as the schools are concerned, the tremendous rush of pupils to schools forced the authorities to adopt various measures to get over the difficulties and one of the measures was to hold the schools by shifts.

"But there is still a great disparity between the comparative poverty of Russia and the great task of popular enlightenment which the country has set out to achieve within the next few years: the elimination of illiteracy and the introduction of universal compulsory primary education. As a result of this disparity, 30 per cent. of the children of school age in the Soviet Union receive no education at all, while the remaining 70 per cent. are taught in schools which are usually over-crowded, some of them working in two or even three shifts."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In *Mass Education in India* by R. V. Parulekar a fairly exhaustive account of this system as practised in the various countries of the world at certain stages of their educational development has been given. Here the discussion will be confined to the system as it is actually practised today in India and abroad.

<sup>2</sup> *Soviet Russia* by W. H. Chamberlain (Duckworth), London, 1930, p. 280.

China is a country which has to tackle the problem of mass education on a magnitude equal to that of India. The latest available information shows that China has resorted to some short-cut devices of schooling, the Shift System being one of them.

"During recent years, several things have been done by Government in regard to elementary education. In the first place, plan for compulsory education was adopted. Many people clearly recognised that in the present condition it would be difficult to carry out at once compulsory education for every child of school age. But it was necessary to extend compulsory education as widely as possible and one year short course compulsory education was adopted for children of the age from 10 to 16, who missed the primary schools. Short course primary schools were established with shorter period than regular primary schools, with curriculum also comparatively simpler. In the common primary schools (first four classes) it was also proposed to have the same school work two shifts a day."<sup>1</sup>

In the Dutch East Indies, in the three-class village school, the hours are divided in such a way that the first half of the day is assigned to the first class and the second half to the second class and the third together, one school master—sometimes aided by an assistant—does the whole teaching.<sup>2</sup> This has enabled the country to secure an average of 50 pupils per teacher in the common schools.

The following account dealing with the Double Shift System in Ceylon is of interest: "The system of 'double schools' provides a practical solution to the difficulty experienced in most countries of having to extend educational facilities without incurring capital or current expenditure".

"Double schools in Ceylon have now passed the trial stage and have become a permanent feature

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese Year Book, 1935-36, p. 483.

<sup>2</sup> Asiatic Review, 1934, p. 120.

of the educational system of the Island. No opposition has been experienced from teachers or parents and the Education Committees have given their whole-hearted support. So adaptable is the system and so great the possible scope for economy in buildings, apparatus and staff that the Department is able to face with equanimity the difficulties arising from curtailed expenditure."<sup>1</sup>

In Egypt: "The bulk of the accommodation available is for whole-time instruction, but it is the policy of the Ministry gradually to change it to half-time accommodation with alternative sessions for boys and girls, thus providing for a larger number of children without any unduly immediate increase in accommodation or staff".<sup>2</sup>

It is further understood that Egypt has confined her Compulsory Education to half-time attendance only.<sup>3</sup>

Turkey also has to "work on half-time system in order to cope with the influx of children".<sup>4</sup>

It has been shown that some countries have been forced to resort to the part-time system in some form or another in order to cope with the ever-increasing difficulty

<sup>1</sup> Overseas Education, April, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Year Book of Education (London), 1932, p. 986.

<sup>3</sup> Year Book of Education (London), 1934, p. 142. The following information is given in the Year Book of Education (London), 1939, p. 746: "Half-day Schools:—In these schools the lessons are given on the same day to two groups, boys and girls separately. The half-day system was adopted for two main reasons:

(1) Economical, because the cost of educating all children would be three million pounds annually instead of six, and

(2) Social, so as to give the children the chance of working with their parents in the farms or the shops during half of the day."

In 1928, out of a total number of 2,80,000 pupils in primary or elementary schools, 1,67,000 were attending half-day schools. In 1938, the figures stood at 9,84,000 and 8,58,000 respectively. In Egypt, about 90 per cent. of the pupils in primary or elementary schools are taught in schools for half the day only. Laws for compulsion were passed in 1933. The lower age-limit is 7.

<sup>4</sup> Year Book of Education (London), 1932, p. 974.

of accommodating more children in schools. India excels all these countries in her poverty and also continues to be educationally backward. Would it not be in her interest to follow their precedents and practices in this regard, with a view to accelerating the liquidation of mass illiteracy?

Denmark, Sweden and Norway which are mainly agricultural countries have developed systems of mass education from which there is much that India can learn with profit. An Indian educationist, Khan Bahadur A. A. Mohomad Zakaullah Khan, M.A., who has visited Denmark, observes as follows: "The children's schools are part-time schools. The law provides that the schools must be open *during 41 weeks in the year*. In rural schools, pupils of every class must be taught 18 hours every week; these 18 hours a week are worked out in different schools according to local circumstances. The principle kept in view is that the farmers must not be deprived more than necessary of the help of their children. In some schools, the children attend the school for 3 hours a day for six days in the week, but much more common is the arrangement by which children attend the school for six hours every alternate day. Under this arrangement, one teacher can take two classes on alternate days".<sup>1</sup>

He recommends the adoption of the part-time system of education of Denmark in the Indian primary schools and says: "I would recommend the arrangement by which the children attend the school for six hours every alternate day. Under this system the number of scholars can be doubled without increasing the number of teachers".<sup>2</sup>

The following system obtains in Norway :

"Country Schools : Even the school year is considerably shorter than in towns, the junior division having only 12 weeks' schooling in the year, the senior division 14 weeks,

<sup>1</sup> The Rural System of Education in Denmark, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

which latter number, however, may be increased to 21 weeks. To this may be added 6 weeks' voluntary instruction, with a foreign language, if desired;..... The ordinary short schooling of the country is usually spread over the year, the pupils attending school only every other day.

"In comparison with the 39 weeks' schooling in the town schools, the country schooling seems rather inadequate. But the fact is that the efficiency of the country schools is considered, broadly speaking, to be on the level with that of the town schools. This may be accounted for by the greater amount of energy the children are able to devote to their school work, when it is confined to three days of the week, the greater amount of time left for their preparation, and perhaps also by the greater maturity of country children who most of them take part in the working life of the farmer at an early age."<sup>1</sup>

The system in Iceland is as follows :

"There are 207 school districts. In 133, there is itinerant, teaching each teacher covering from 2 to 4 centres with a minimum of eight to twelve weeks' teaching for each child. There are fixed schools in eight towns, 31 villages and 35 rural districts with a minimum school term of six months in towns and villages and twelve weeks in rural schools."<sup>2</sup>

Sweden fulfilled her duty towards her people in the matter of mass education in a somewhat different way. In Sweden (1902), in many places, the school district was divided into two or more sections (Rota) and the school migrated from one to another dividing school year between them. Even in the ordinary schools a school is often subdivided between different groups of children, different classes being taught at different periods of the year, or on alternate days of the week; so that in actual practice, many Swedish children are only under instruction for four months of the year.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Year Book of Education, 1935, p. 880.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> Special Reports on Educational Subjects (London), Vol. III, p. 100.

In Australia and New Zealand, the devices used to tackle the problem of small number of children available at each place are varied and interesting. There are travelling teachers, Saturday schools, Week-end schools, Home to Home schools, Part-time schools and Camp schools.<sup>1</sup>

The practices followed by some of the countries of the world enumerated above supply lessons for India which she should not fail to take to heart. India is a continent and the conditions prevailing in countries mentioned above are to be found in India in some part or another.

A peep into what has been done in India in respect of adoption of the Shift System or other modes of part-time instruction may be of interest. The earliest mention of some measure of part-time instruction is made in the Progress of Education in India for 1907-12.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that somewhere between 1917 and 1922 experiments of half-time schools were made in some places. For, while the Progress of Education in India for 1912-17 does not make any specific mention of such measures, the next issue for 1917-22 refers to 'half-time schools'. The report says : "The half-time system met with a certain success for a time in the Allahabad district, but this success is now attributed to the personal influence of its originator. With his transfer to another station it has fallen into desuetude." Attempts elsewhere have met with even less success. The Chairman of the District Board, Pilibhit, says : "Parents expressed their opinion of the value of the half-time system by simply withdrawing their boys". Belief in this experiment dies hard, and it is still being tried in the United Provinces and the Central Provinces. The Inspector of Schools, Berar, reports that "the scheme however is unpopular with the teachers, the parents and the children, and it is yet too early to gauge the result of the

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<sup>1</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1924, pp. 15-16 and pp. 337-338.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 112.



experiment as a means of economising staffs and funds or of increasing the number of pupils".<sup>1</sup>

The Progress of Education for 1922-27 does not continue the thread of the U. P. and C. P. experiments mentioned in the previous report. One hardly knows what happened to those experiments. But this report makes mention of Bombay experiments of a similar nature: "In some districts in Bombay experiments have been made with the double shift system by which infants attend school at one session of 2½ hours and the rest of the pupils at another session of three hours. It is however reported that the experiment has not been successful, both the parents and the teachers having opposed it, the former because the children are not sufficiently long at school and the latter because it means extra work".<sup>2</sup>

The Hartog Committee have observed on this measure (Shift System) as follows: "Both in Assam and in Bombay experiments have been made in the double shift system in which the school is divided by the teacher into two sections, each section only sitting for half the ordinary school day. Such a method enables the teacher to handle the infants and the more advanced pupils separately, thus improving the instruction given. We have been told that this expedient is proving a success in Assam, but that in Bombay it does not give satisfaction either to the parents or to the authorities".<sup>3</sup>

The Progress of Education for 1927-32 does not contain remarks on this system. The matter seems to have been considered quite insignificant to deserve any mention in the report.

So far as Bombay Province is concerned, the Shift System has had a chequered career. It passed through three definite stages as revealed by official opinion. The years 1912-22 witnessed several experiments with the system and it was found that it had "produced good results".<sup>4</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 120-21.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> Report, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> D. P. I.'s Report for 1917-18, Vol. I, p. 16.

was further believed that though the idea was a sound one, it was not meeting with the approval of parents and teachers and the opinion was therefore expressed that it was more likely that the system would be successful under compulsory education.<sup>1</sup>

The Chandavarkar Committee on whose report the Bombay Primary Education Act of 1923 was based, made the following observation as regards the Shift System: "On the whole we are prepared to recommend that Local authorities who desire to introduce the 'Shift' system, by which half the pupils in the lower classes attend school in the morning and other half in the afternoon, should be allowed to do so, but we consider that the experiment should be watched carefully".<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence of this recommendation provision was made under Section 7 (3) (d) of the Primary Education Act of 1923 to allow Local Educational Authorities to introduce the Shift System after obtaining previous sanction of Government.

During the period 1923-28, the official opinion was that although the system was unpopular with parents and teachers it had much to commend itself in the case of one-teacher schools and if the co-operation of the teachers could be secured by the payment of adequate extra remuneration, considerable success might be achieved.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1929, which coincided with the change in the Head of the Educational Department, witnessed a complete change in the outlook on the problem as can be seen from the following extract from the Annual Report for 1928-29: "Though the system is neither popular nor educationally commendable it is being tried in different quarters as a measure of economy, especially where compulsion is being introduced".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. P. I.'s Report for 1920-21, Vol. I, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Report, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Report for 1927-28, Vol. I, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Report, Vol. I, p. 40.

The change in the outlook began to be reflected in the reports for the successive years and in his Report for 1932-33, the Director went so far as to declare that the system was not sound and the sooner it was abandoned the better.<sup>1</sup>

In view of such condemnation by the highest educational official it is no wonder that the system did not make any headway during this period. But although it did not thrive it continued to linger, because owing to diminishing financial help by Government and the increasing number of children attending schools, some Local Educational Authorities could not but allow the system to continue.

With the advent of a popular Government in the year 1937 things have taken a dramatic turn in Bombay so far as official outlook on the Shift System is concerned. In their eagerness for expansion of mass education Government have not only restored the cuts in grants made to Local Educational Authorities but have definitely advised them to give a fair trial to the Shift System and other forms of part-time instruction in order to accelerate progress.

The views recently expressed on the Shift System in different parts of India may now be briefly considered.

The Burma Education Reorganization Committee recommend: "Local Education Authorities should be permitted to prepare for sanction by the competent education authority, schemes of instruction by a shift system when such organization is necessitated by local conditions and shortage of staff".<sup>2</sup>

The D. P. I. of Assam says: "Another cause, viz., inconvenient hours of attendance for those children who are required to help their parents at home or in the field, can be easily remedied by arranging morning and night schools, and also by double shift sitting of classes".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report, Vol. I, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Report, pp. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> Report for 1927-32, p. 125.

The Vocational Training Committee of the Bombay Government recommend "that Local Authorities and Managements of approved schools be permitted, if they so desire, to introduce the Shift System and other forms of part-time instruction in their schools with a view to accelerating the spread of education amongst the masses".<sup>1</sup>

The Education Survey Committee of Cochin (1934) observe: "We do not think that a small child in the first two or three classes requires instruction for full five hours, and that.....it will be desirable to extend the system to all Lower elementary schools, such schools working only for 2½ hours a day".<sup>2</sup>

In this connection the D. P. I., Mysore, in his Annual Report for 1933-34, says: "The other method which has been tried and given up, but which may have to be tried again, is the Shift System. Instead of two sessions each day, children of any one class are at school only either in the morning or in the afternoon. This system has been tried in Ceylon and is said to have been beneficial".<sup>3</sup>

In Hyderabad State, they have recently introduced the Shift System on a wide scale. One of the reasons for its adoption is that it "will to a certain extent remove the frequent complaint of the parents in rural areas that the present school hours do not give their children an opportunity of helping them in their occupations. The boys will now have half-a-day set free for such work".<sup>4</sup>

The Rev. Milton G. Koults observes: "The solution that I would offer for this problem (teaching very large numbers) is to make the present staff and permanent equipment do double duty. If a prosperous country like the United States has had to resort to the double shift system, I think it is time that in India we think also along the same lines".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Hyderabad Teacher (Oct.-Dec., 1938), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Report, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Educational Review, May, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Report, p. 85.

From the above account of what is being done in India today about the Shift System and of what is being said about its utility, it will be seen that its introduction in India is not only desirable but extremely necessary. The question is how to make use of it on a large scale. Hitherto most of the experiments were sporadic which only succeeded where they were introduced in the whole area under a local educational authority. This is the experience not only in India but even in foreign countries. There must not be exceptions, because they give rise to comparisons and even to suspicion about the motives of those who initiate the change. When, however, certain measures are made voluntary only, people fail to see the good in them and try picking holes. In the field of education the difficulties are still greater. Most of the measures calculated to bring about good results in mass education, if enforced, do not yield results for a long time. That is why all over the world compulsion has to be introduced in mass education. If then the State is convinced that a particular measure will lead to good results in mass education, it must not leave the thing to the sweet will of the people.

Opposition to a system of part-time instruction in its various forms centres round its probable effects on 'efficiency'. Efficiency, however, is a relative term, and must needs bear relationship to the social and economic background of a country. Apart from this, because of territorial, financial and other considerations, many countries of the world have taken recourse to the part-time system of teaching. The system has become well-nigh universal and it would almost look impertinent for a poor country like India to cavil at it.

In Mass Education in India the question of quality versus quantity has been discussed in great detail by the writer where it has been shown that owing to the official predilection in favour of quality, quantity has been ruthlessly sacrificed. An effective rejoinder to the official view is supplied by the following extract from an Editorial in the Times of India: "If democracy in India is to be a success, the main burden of educational effort must be directed to breaking down the illiteracy

of the masses. Can this be done? Already expenditure on education is as much as—if not more than—the country can afford; it is impossible to contemplate any great additional capital outlay or recurrent increases in provincial educational budgets. If the effort is to be made it will have to be for the most part within the present financial order of things. The main problem is the spread of primary education. Official initiative is inevitably necessary, for the uneducated will not demand instruction. Faced by a palpable inability to find more funds for this purpose, Government have no other obvious alternative but to compromise quality for the sake of quantity. That is an extremely serious suggestion to make, as we are fully aware. It cuts at the very root of official educational effort carried on arduously in the present century. Yet hard though it is, would it not be in the interest of the country to face the issue?

“The choice is apparently between the efficient instruction of the few and the literacy of the many. By which method is general advance most likely to be expedited? Appreciation of education is itself a consequence of education, and the experience of other countries does seem to show that speedy progress was most marked where mass effort was made. In countries like England or even Japan—if historical comparison is made when their educational expansion was in vogue—it is found that numbers were the main consideration and that, with large classes and relays of classes, some measure of instruction was imparted by one teacher to large numbers. In countries with large territorial areas a teacher might be in charge of several centres between which his activities were divided. Such methods demand a syllabus on modest and straightforward lines, and teachers of character and ability. So far as India is concerned this would mean resiling to some extent from our present policy. It is a serious step to take, but how else is the darkness to be lightened? To get at all the children, the available provision of primary education requires to be quadrupled or more. The rate of increase in literacy as a result of consistent and successful attempts to reduce stagnation and wastage has undoubtedly improved, and at the

present speed the next generation will show far better figures of advance than the last.

“ Yet even that measure of improvement will be minute compared with the whole. It would seem almost beyond our resources to make any further material attack on illiteracy if present standards of efficiency are maintained. The key to advance, the success of a sustained campaign for village and rural uplift, the very fate of a democratically constituted India, are vitally dependent on the extension of mass education. Must we not, therefore, most seriously consider whether it would be wiser in the long run to modify quality in a wider interest and initiate a concerted drive on the dangerous apathy which widespread ignorance promotes ? ” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Times of India, 17th November, 1936.

## CHAPTER XV

### COMPULSION AND EXPANSION

Since the day the late Mr. G. K. Gokhale introduced into the Central Legislature a bill for making primary education compulsory, the idea of compulsion has been in the forefront and, according to some, it is a sovereign remedy for attaining mass literacy. But this view is only partially correct. Compulsion can force a child to attend a school and keep him there till the period of compulsion is over. But the attainment of literacy, which is one of the most important aims of compulsory education, cannot be guaranteed even if the child stays in the school for, say, four years. It is well known that several pupils remain in the first two classes for 4 or 5 years. Compulsion with such stagnation will be of small use and the money spent will not yield a full return in terms of literates. Before applying compulsion, therefore, the first essential is that the internal organization of schooling should be so adjusted as to minimise retardation by non-promotion of pupils. On pages 68-73 this question has been discussed at length. Unless, therefore, proper steps are taken in this direction, it would not be advisable for the State to resort to compulsion.

Although compulsion is by far the most effective remedy for securing rapid increase in literacy, it is, at the same time, a very expensive one. Experience shows that, even when compulsion is introduced, a certain percentage of children of the compulsory age will not attend school, although provision has to be made on the supposition that all will come. Thus, from a purely financial point of view, there will be certain amount of waste of money. This is illustrated by the following statistics<sup>1</sup> of England from the year 1871, the first year when the element of compulsion was introduced, to 1898, when compulsion was fully effective.

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol. I, p. 48.



Year	Number for whom accommodation was provided (in lakhs)	Number of students on the Registers (in lakhs)	Average attendance (in lakhs)
1871	20 (100)	16 (90)	12 (60)
1881	44 (100)	40 (90)	29 (66)
1896	59 (100)	53 (90)	43 (70)

*N.B.*—Figures in brackets denote percentage.

It will be seen from the above table that in England the introduction of compulsion entailed large waste which amounted to about 10 per cent. if the number of students on the Registers are considered, and to about 30 to 40 per cent. if the average attendance is taken into account. It is important to note also that this had continued even after a quarter of a century of compulsion. When a nation seriously launches compulsion it must of necessity provide for a larger number of pupils than are likely to attend immediately; and further, it must be prepared to see a good proportion of the money wasted. For the nation has to make its plan on the hope that the people will realise the importance of educating their children. A number of places have to be reserved all the year round. This is indeed a great sacrifice, but it has to be made if universal education is to be achieved. India in its poverty is naturally impatient of wastage of any sort. The wastage caused by early leaving of children could, to a great extent, be stopped by compulsion; but the other type of financial wastage—due to the necessity of providing more accommodation than is likely to be utilized—seems to be unavoidable as is shown by the example of England.

It has been the practice in some parts of India as also in some other countries to promulgate laws of compulsion without providing for all the children of the compulsory age-group. This really is not compulsion. It is a type of

self-deception which may ultimately have harmful reactions owing to the loose conception of compulsion and a consequent tendency to avoid effective compulsion even when the State has the wherewithal to have it.

According to the existing financial arrangements between Government and local educational authorities, the Government grant for areas where compulsion is introduced is based on the number of pupils on the rolls and not on the number for which the local educational authority has to make provision. It has been pointed out already that in any scheme of compulsion there is a wide difference between the number of pupils provided for and the number on the rolls; and the Government grant in all justice should be based on the former number.

A new feature of compulsion is coming into prominence in India particularly in Madras where provision has been made for a modified form of compulsion. Its main object is "to secure that once a child has entered a school, it must remain there until the limits of the compulsory age and may not discontinue attending school".<sup>1</sup> Laudable though the experiment is it should be remembered that even this modified form of compulsion involves considerable financial responsibility and perhaps much waste of money unless simultaneous efforts are made to prevent stagnation.

Whatever its form, compulsion in education is a costly remedy. And unless a nation is prepared to set aside the necessary finances, it is better to rely upon expansion through other methods. It should also be noted here that compulsion is a double-edged weapon and hasty measures to introduce compulsion may do more harm than good; they might divert funds for compulsion when perhaps the same, if used more economically, would bring better results without compulsion.

<sup>1</sup> Education in India in 1934-35, p. 48.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE PROBLEM OF THE CURRICULUM

Some broad principles regarding the curricula for primary schools may be laid down. First of all, school curricula in general have been evolved not as a result of conscious thought, but mainly on the basis of the existing practices and age-long traditions. This is clearly shown by the following observation of Mr. Kandel: "The making of curricula and courses of study has been too much dominated by conventions and traditions to the neglect of the demands of everyday life. The curricula have grown by the accretion of subjects and subject matter without any careful synthesis or interpretation. Courses of studies have been imitated and copied while the influence of text-books has been detrimental to freedom and to local adoption".<sup>1</sup>

Curricula are man-made things and like all other mundane affairs are liable to change. Their vitality lies in flexibility so as to meet changing conditions and new demands. It is not unusual to find teachers and even those who supervise their work being reluctant to go beyond or below the prescribed curricula. In India one comes across primary school curricula which have hardly changed over a period of a quarter of a century. It is no wonder that the teaching profession as a whole should attribute immutability to such curricula. And if the curricula are at all changed, some of the older members of the profession look upon the changes as inroads to be steadily resisted with the zeal of martyrs. This conservative attitude is well illustrated by the story of an old American teacher who was blamed for teaching the cube-root to a class from whose syllabus the teaching of the cube-root was deleted. The reply of the teacher was: "These children shall not be deprived of cube-root so long as I can stand before them as their teacher".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Comparative Education, p. 504.

<sup>2</sup> The New Era, March, 1932, p. 74.

Not only should curricula be mainly based on the conditions of life of the people in each locality, but it is of the utmost importance that they should be so framed that the contents prescribed may easily be finished by a class within the time that the teacher can conveniently give to it. The curricula should again have direct relation to the qualification and capacity of the teacher. If these salutary principles are followed, the number of failures in Indian schools will appreciably go down.

The curricula for primary schools should grow richer and richer as the level of the community rises in knowledge and in the appreciation of its acquisition. Hence, it is necessary that too much should not be attempted where too much is neither needed nor appreciated. This is especially so in the backward tracts of the country and in the early years of schooling. The crushing weight and the deadening pressure of the task make children dull and listless.

In this connection it would be of interest to quote from the speech of Mr. Satyendra Nath Roy, I.C.S., at the 15th All-Bengal Teachers' Conference held at Comilla. He said: "The boys in the lower forms are taught too many things in our country. Boys from 8 to 12 in our schools know much more than the boys of the same age in Europe. But the crushing weight of the books and the deadening pressure of the task tend to make the intellect of our boys dull from 12 onwards and the result is that after 12, boys in Europe acquire greater and more useful knowledge than boys of the same age in our country. Boys are bound to grow dull if undue pressure of study is put on them in the early years".<sup>1</sup>

If these principles are observed in framing curricula, it does not matter whether they consist of the three R's only or of many other subjects.

<sup>1</sup> Educational India, May-June, 1936, p. 426.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LITERACY AND EDUCATION

There is of late a great awakening in India in favour of promoting mass literacy. Some people, however, seem to be opposed to this so-called concentration on literacy as they fear that as a result of this new awakening education will be sacrificed. According to them what is required in India is education; and literacy is not education. In fact, 'literacy' versus 'education' is only another garb for 'quality' versus 'quantity'.

According to the advocates of this school of thought, education is quite different from literacy—acquisition of the skill to read and write. No one, not even the greatest advocate of literacy, will contend that the acquisition of literacy is identical with the acquisition of education; but even the most zealous advocates of education must admit that acquisition of literacy is the first essential step in the acquisition of education. It is, therefore, difficult to understand why the advocates of education should oppose the progress of literacy. They will certainly not deny the great truth that whatever be our talk about education, the ability to read and write is at its very root. Education in its modern sense is organically connected with the ability to read and write and no amount of wordy warfare can dislodge literacy from its high pedestal. In fact, broadly speaking literacy is the foundation on which the structure of education is mainly built. The advocates of literacy, it should be remembered, do not want to deny the right of a citizen to have more than what is implied in the term 'literacy'. What they demand is to have first things first. In the words of the late Mr. G. K. Gokhale: "Primary purpose of mass education is to banish illiteracy from the land. The quality of education is a matter of importance that comes only after illiteracy has been banished".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gokhale's Speeches (Natesan & Co., 2nd Edition), p. 772.

If one looks at the history of the development of mass education in all the countries of the world, there is ample evidence to show that those who emphasize the acquisition of literacy as the most important function of primary education are not doing anything new. They are simply following the royal road to education.

The supreme importance of the acquisition of literacy as one of the aims of primary education in India has been duly emphasized by those who have had occasion to formulate the 'aims' of primary education in India. They have fixed the acquisition of literacy as their first objective. This emphasis on literacy has led some to say: "A school (in India) is designed to confer literacy upon those who undertake the courses provided".<sup>1</sup> The point has been put in a nutshell in the Report of the D. P. I., Bombay, for 1922-27: "The policy has been to concentrate on essentials and to use the money available to teach the 3 R's to as many boys and girls as possible. The policy may be open to criticism from the purely educational point of view. I feel however that it is necessary to take a broader view. The first essential for anything in the nature of democratic government in India is a literate electorate. The cultivators are the backbone of the country and it is right that they should have a voice in the government, but they should at least be literate, if they are to take an intelligent interest in political questions".<sup>2</sup>

This undoubtedly sound view of mass education appears to have undergone considerable change in recent years in Bombay. This changed view is best exemplified by the inclusion in the newly drafted syllabus for Primary Training Colleges of an item called "Meaning of Mass Education—Difference between education and literacy—scope and limitations of mere literacy—object of education". In the absence of further details it is not clear as to what is meant by "limitations of mere literacy". It is, however, clear that the Department of Education in Bombay expects

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Primary Education in U. P.—R. S. Weir, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Report, Vol. I, p. 94.

the lecturers in their training colleges to warn the would-be teachers not to concentrate on "mere literacy" for fear of neglecting education. They would have literacy and education or nothing at all.

Such an item of study in any Training College Course has no parallel in any part of the world. In a land plunged in illiteracy, it is most unwise to prescribe the study of "limitations of mere literacy" for budding teachers under training. It is like lecturing on over-feeding to a population dying of starvation. The teaching of such a subject will obviously result in counteracting private and state efforts in combating illiteracy by prejudicing the minds of the teachers—or, at least, of some of them. Such a teaching in the name of training is bound to impede the path of progress of literacy and indirectly the extension of mass education itself.

The following account of how the co-operation of the teachers under training is considered essential in fighting against illiteracy would be instructive: "When they undertook to weed out illiteracy in the State of Mississippi one of the things they did was to ask the teachers in their examination how to rid the State of adult illiteracy. The idea was that they should think about illiteracy and consider the plans for removing it".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of the World Education Conference at Edinburgh (1925), Vol. II, p. 639.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

In a country like India where the general percentage of literacy is only 8, the necessity of adult education for the promotion of literacy requires no special pleading or justification. For, as Sir George Anderson has observed : "In present-day conditions, failure to promote education for adults must inevitably result in failure to remove illiteracy".<sup>1</sup>

Such statistics as are available (and they are not very reliable either) show that there were about 3½ lakhs of adults under instruction in the whole of India in 1927 and their number dwindled in 1932 to 1½ lakhs. The State Departments of Education appear to have been completely oblivious of the problem of adult education prior to the twenties of the present century ; and it is only thereafter that one sees a mention of the topic in the Annual and Quinquennial Reports.

It is very heartening, however, to see that with the advent of autonomy in Provincial Governments a wave of enthusiasm for the spread of literacy among the adults should pass over the country. For the first time in the history of education in India, Provincial Governments are showing keen interest in this work. In the Province of Bombay, the Government have appointed an Adult Education Board for starting, consolidating and aiding adult education and have also earmarked funds for the purpose.

'Adults' and 'Adult Education' have been defined by the Adult Education Committee appointed by the Bombay Government as follows : "We mean by 'Adult' (in its relation to Adult Education) all those above the age of 14, whose formal education either has not started or has ended; and by 'Adult Education'

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<sup>1</sup> Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, p. 259.



we mean (1) the education of the illiterate at all stages; and (2) the further education of literates at any stage and in any direction. The latter type of education may be life-long and is not primarily directed to material ends. We are dividing Adult Education work into two parts; (1) that which centres round literacy, including the preparatory ground-work and the subsequent follow-up work, both in rural and urban areas; and (2) Adult Education as it is commonly understood in the West—that education which the adult seeks for himself or herself in the civilized community for supplementing an imperfect education and for extending and enriching the possibilities of life”.<sup>1</sup>

So far as India is concerned adult education must for the present be mainly confined to the spread of literacy. When that object is achieved, the other forms of adult education as practised in advanced countries of the world could as well claim the attention of the State and of the people. This does not, however, mean that other forms of adult education should be altogether ignored. It is desirable in the wider interests of the country, to encourage these activities wherever they are in operation so that when time is ripe for their wide-spread adoption, the country may not begin them as entirely fresh activities.

The problem of adult education in India resolves itself into two types; (1) of semi-literates and (2) of illiterates. Semi-literates are those above the age of 14 who have been in school for some time, but who have left school before attaining literacy.

The approximate number of such semi-literates for the Bombay Presidency (including Sind) during the decade 1922-31 may here be estimated :

Class	Number on Roll 1922-31 (in lakhs)	Number promoted to the higher class (in lakhs)
1st Year	33.5	14.8
2nd Year	17.2	10.2
3rd Year	14.6	8.3

<sup>1</sup> Report (1938), p. 1.

In order to eliminate the number of 'repeaters', only the number of promoted pupils may here be considered. During the decade, 14.8 lakhs of pupils completed the 1st year class, and 8.3 lakhs, the 3rd year class. Roughly speaking, during the decade if the schools sent out 8 lakhs of literates, they sent out 6 lakhs of semi-literates, all of whom had spent not less than one year in school, and further, all of whom had stood the most difficult ordeal of completing the 1st year class. Out of these 6 lakhs of semi-literates nearly 2 lakhs represent those who have completed the 2nd year class and therefore can be said to be on the verge of attaining literacy. They require only a little more instruction to acquire literacy.

Calculating similar figures for British India (including Burma), it is found that roughly two crores of pupils left schools after completing the 1st year class of whom nearly 70 lakhs completed the 3rd year class. This means that more than a crore of persons are semi-literates who can, with a little more effort, be made literates. And this number is only for the decade 1922-31; if similar number for subsequent years be taken into account the total number of semi-literates will probably reach three crores. These figures bring out in clear relief the vast potentialities of a campaign against illiteracy through the further instruction of semi-literates. It should be noted here that the vast number of pupils who leave schools without completing the 1st year class has not been taken into account. The rendering of these semi-literates into literates will constitute a most powerful lever for raising the percentage of literacy in India at a much smaller cost.

Researches into the correlation between age and learning ability show a curve ascending sharply from the age of 14 to 22 and descending gradually thereafter. The youths of a country in the age-group 15 to 25, whether illiterates or semi-literates, constitute the most strategic group in the present generation from the point of view of attacking illiteracy. The semi-literates will be rendered literate with ease; while the illiterates will take longer time. It is, therefore, in the interest of the country as a whole

that the first attack in the campaign against mass illiteracy should be directed at the semi-literates of the age-group 15 to 25.

Although the instruction of those who are in the age-group 15 to 25 is conducive of the best results, those in higher age-groups also respond to instruction often more quickly than school children. Dr. E. L. Thorndike, as a result of careful experiment, observes: "A man or a woman under 50 should seldom be discouraged from trying to learn. To the lesser degree, this is true after 50 years".<sup>1</sup> Adults in America were taught reading, writing and arithmetic for only one month and the results scientifically measured. The work done by the intermediate group was equal to what average elementary pupils do in 7.5 months and the advanced group's work was equal to 9.5 months of work by children.

Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart of Kentucky (U.S.A.) observes as follows with regard to the ease with which illiterates learn to read and write and to acquire the rudiments of an elementary education: "In our experience we find that a man or woman can learn to make their signature in one evening, to write a legible letter in ten weeks, and some of them in one week's time. They can learn to read an ordinary elementary reader in six weeks' time, and they acquire the minimum essentials of history, geography and civics in six weeks' course. Some of them think that it is something which comes about in a miraculous way, as manna from heaven".<sup>2</sup>

The great advantage of instructing grown-up children and young adults from the point of view of time and money in carrying on a nation-wide campaign against mass illiteracy, has been fully realised by the Chinese National Government. This realization has been quickly translated into a measure which seeks to make compulsory attendance in a short-term elementary school for a year for grown-

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<sup>1</sup> *Better Village Schools*—Mason Abbott, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the World Education Conference at Edinburgh (1925), Vol. II, p. 638.*

up children and young adults, between the ages of 10 and 16, who have no opportunity of schooling.<sup>1</sup>

India can take a lesson from China in fighting illiteracy through adult education. Dr. Ping Ling, in his address<sup>2</sup> at the World Education Conference held at Edinburgh in 1925, gave a very instructive account of the campaign against illiteracy that was being carried on in China through adult education.

Dr. Ling referred to the difficulties of the Chinese language which for a decent mastery in reading and writing required at least a ten years' study. The spoken language was different from the written language. The first thing that was accomplished was to substitute the spoken language for the written language and to make it current in books, magazines and newspapers. Even after this, it required at least 4 or 5 years for a person to read and write the spoken language. With a view to solving this difficulty the spoken language was reduced to 1,000 characters, and although some improvement on the selection of these 1,000 characters was bound to take place, the system had been working very well. Dr. Ling further observed: "Now, you might ask how much time does it take for a person to master the thousand characters, because a thousand characters means a thousand different kinds of writing. Each stroke must be placed in its proper place, not as in the English language, A, B, C, D, and so on, where only you have two dozen characters to master. We have a thousand to master, and each one has its own meaning, so that it is very hard for the people to master them. But, we find that that is not so with the Chinese youth. We take them for one hour a day during the six weekdays, and we can get an intelligent youth to master those thousand characters in four months. And not only it is so in the case of youths but we also find that it is possible in the case of people of advanced age, so that it is a true saying that one is never too old to learn. We have a lady

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<sup>1</sup> The China Year Book, 1935, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> The address is printed on pp. 639 to 647 of Vol. II of the Report of the Conference.

of sixty-seven who learned to read and write in four months, and she got a diploma for that”.

Dr. Ling's account of propaganda methods of adult education is of interest: “The next question is how to reach the great mass of people who cannot read or write. . . . . In order to reach every illiterate in any locality one must have an organization. We must stir up the people in the cities and in the villages to get them interested in the subject. We first of all start a campaign in the city, getting the magistrate or mayor of the city interested in the subject, and we make him feel it his duty to wipe out this illiteracy. Secondly, we get the school teachers to help us, volunteers who must serve after school hours to teach these illiterates, say, one hour a day, and we get the High School students to work after school hours in teaching those illiterates for an hour a day during six days of the week. We also have open-air schools during the summer. In some cases we have classes of 200, 400 or 500 pupils, and two or three teachers can manage them very well in the evenings in the open-air places.

“Then we have what we call ‘home schools.’ A certain family, say, employs a number of maids or servants, as is very common in Chinese families, we make the owner of the house more or less responsible for them, just as if you employed a man servant or maid who could not read or write and it was your duty to see to it that they were able to read and write within four months. The master of the house is made responsible for educating his servants. Also we have a travelling teacher who goes around to collect those servants from the different houses at certain hours of the day, from four to five or three to four. This travelling teacher after school hours will go and collect them in a certain family or a certain place by arrangement, and then she will begin to teach a class of 20 or 30, and no teacher is allowed to quit his job until he has finished it.

“Now, it is a strenuous task to keep at it for four months for six days a week. Then we have certain stations

in the city where we place certain students or teachers for the coolies whose work is not business, they do not work in the factories or anywhere else, but they run the streets, and therefore they do not stay in one place. At each street corner you can find our student there for any one to ask questions based on those thousand characters. Any coolie, if he has five minutes to spare, can go there and ask him questions and he will be taught. We have one thousand and one ways of reaching the illiterates.

"Then we have a system of graduating these students; a diploma is a kind of honour to them, and a kind of certificate for their employment in the future. And we say to the families, 'You should not employ illiterates in your families. If you already employ them you must make them able to read and write'. Thus we bring pressure on the illiterates on the one hand by saying 'You must learn if you want to ensure your employment in the future', and, on the other hand, we say to the employers, 'You must make your employees able to read and write if you want social support'.

"After the youth has finished his four months' schooling we have continuation schools for other four months. In these continuation schools we teach them geography, civics, history, hygiene, and so on, and these little text-books are based on these thousand characters. If any character is employed in those text-books which is not in the thousand characters they are enumerated, so that you have no difficulty in reading. Usually you find the young people graduate from the first primary school and then go to the continuation schools. For those who cannot go to the continuation schools we have reading clubs, and some of the ladies in the city or some of the school teachers in the city will act as the ladies of the reading clubs and help those youths who want to read books from the public library. They can go there and read, and if they cannot understand there is always some one in the reading-room who can explain to them. This is what we are doing in China. So far we have granted two million diplomas in two years."

This rather lengthy account of the campaign against illiteracy through adult education in China has been given because to us, who have yet to build up proper methods and practices in adult education, it would be most illuminating. China is a nation which has much in common with us. The difference in the percentage of literacy is, however, too great to be ignored. China has more than 20 per cent. of its population already literate; while India has not yet even 10 per cent. literates. China is far ahead of us in literacy and the efforts that India has to make must therefore be more vigorous and extensive.

When Dr. Ling spoke of the Chinese Adult Education Movement, the work as described was mainly carried on by the Chinese National Association for the Advancement of Education. It was more or less a private association. In 1929, however, the National Government of China took the problem in hand and the Ministry of Education issued a set of regulations governing the development of the adult school, "thereby giving the educators in adult schools a basis upon which to organise their efforts".<sup>1</sup>

The following are some of the important points in the Chinese Government regulations. The adult schools are meant for pupils between the ages of 16 and 50. Adult schools whether public or private are subject to the supervision of the District or the City Educational Authorities. These authorities may establish according to local needs adult schools in which to try new methods. Adult schools are free and open to all, where books and stationery are provided free of charge. The instruction is to cover at least three months, with a weekly schedule of at least 12 hours. The classes are preferably held in the evenings and on holidays. Evening schools may be established by private persons or groups of persons in shops, factories or clubs.

Although the Chinese Adult Education Movement originated with the object of giving training in reading and

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinese Year Book, 1935-36, p. 487.

writing and elementary knowledge of citizenship, it has now placed before it a broader objective especially while tackling the problem in villages.

"Successful as this work has been in large cities, it is confronted with serious difficulties in rural communities. And in rural communities over 80 per cent. of the Chinese population live. There not only do they live in thinly scattered condition which renders mass teaching difficult, but they also live under very severe economic pressure which makes the teaching of reading and writing seem of little use. There the teaching of the use of better farming implements, of modern agricultural methods, of village self-government, of how to organise co-operative societies, etc. will command much greater following. It is this which leads the workers in adult education to strike a new line."<sup>1</sup>

In China the Adult Education Movement began in 1920. The rapid progress of adult education in China is seen from the fact that in 1934 there were about 40,000 adult schools conducted at a cost of about 40 lakhs Chinese dollars. The League of Nations' Commission on the Reorganisation of Education in China have paid a glowing tribute to the work of adult education in China. They say : "Adult Education is one of the most satisfactory features of education in China.....it bulks much larger in the educational system as a whole, and its budget is proportionately far bigger than in other countries".<sup>2</sup>

China has realised to the fullest the supreme importance of adult education as no other educationally backward Asiatic country has done. She appears to believe that in the present circumstances it is only with the assistance of adult schools that literacy can be made universal.

The place of adult education in the system of mass education in a country where illiteracy is very high can never be overestimated. In fact for some time to come it must occupy a place in the system on a par with the education of the children. The task is, however, so colossal

<sup>1</sup> The China Year Book, 1935, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Report, p. 188.



that nothing short of a whirlwind campaign can give encouraging results. For this, therefore, Government with its administrative machinery, private agencies of all sorts and the public spirited men and women from all ranks of the community will have to take an intensely active part in one huge effort of a sustained campaign against illiteracy through adult education.

A child requires on an average about four years to become literate through school education; but an adult, if properly subjected to instruction, can be made literate in less than a year. From the point of view of expenditure also it can be safely said that while a boy under school instruction in British India costs Rs. 9 per year, an adult under instruction for a year will hardly require half the amount. The schooling of a boy for four years requires Rs. 36, while an adult requires only Rs. 4; for a year's effective instruction for the acquisition of literacy suffices in his case. One may, therefore, say that the increase of literacy through adult instruction is four times quicker from the time element and nine times paying from the financial point of view. It is only by such quick and cheap agency that a poor country like India can liquidate illiteracy in a reasonable period of time.

Adult Education has never been attempted in India on a large scale and even the small efforts made so far have not been successful. The reasons for this apathy and failure may be several. The main reason, however, is that the movement has been till now given a subordinate place in our efforts in mass education. Adult education has had practically no place in the Government system of education. Whatever work was or is being done is carried on by private agencies and it is doubtful whether they ever received any substantial help from Provincial Revenues. No wonder, therefore, that such labour of love unguided and unaided by the State should fail to produce measurable results. The need for the movement, therefore, is that the State should immediately recognise the supreme importance of adult education in the educational system of the country, and, without any delay, incorporate it in the system setting up organizations for its proper control,

guidance and aid. Any organised effort of a permanent character has to be reduced to a State-guided system and adult education must be so reduced, with all its concomitant advantages of the pooling of experience, precedents and practices.

The initiative in this respect must come from the State which should set up organizations and promulgate rules and regulations for guiding and aiding all efforts in adult education as it has been doing in the case of primary education. An excellent example in this respect is supplied by the National Government of China. Research and experiment in methods of adult education is the primary duty of the State. The State may make use of private agencies for this purpose if that is possible. Direction, supervision and aid are the three main functions of the State in respect of adult education and these functions cannot be efficiently discharged by half-hearted measures. The Staff employed for this work must be competent and adequately paid. Promulgation of adult education on a nation-wide scale is not possible unless the State and semi-State bodies like Municipalities and District Boards, which are at present responsible for conducting and aiding primary education, are made to take up that work as their everyday routine work just like that of primary education. Then alone will the system of adult education thrive.

Fortunately, adult education work is still associated in the public mind with ideas of charity and benevolence. Employers of labour, social workers and philanthropists regard adult education as deserving of help and support. Although, therefore, the system of adult education must be the primary responsibility of the State, in assuming this enormous responsibility the State should not fail to take into account the public sentiment and thereby relieve itself of a part of the burden.

An important aspect of adult education is the publication by the State of suitable literature for the instruction of the illiterates and for the continuation of the education of the adults who are made literates. The need for such literature is most urgent, if the reclaiming of

the semi-literates into the fold of literates, as also the making of illiterate adults into literates, is to be real and effective. There is hardly any literature at present available in the country which could, with profit, be placed in the hands of adults who have just attained literacy through adult instruction. In fact, this is the crux of the problem of adult education. What use is it to teach the adults to read if no suitable literature is made available to them as soon as they are literates? The production of such literature must go hand in hand with the spread of adult education. Otherwise, the money and energy spent over the instruction of the adults will be wasted. Out of every rupee that the State and the community may be able to set aside for the promotion of adult education, at least four annas must be invested in the production of literature of all sorts that will interest the newly produced literates. Again, the books so published must be cheap. For, many of the newly produced adult literates may not be able or even willing to buy them. In such cases the books will have to be supplied to them free till they are able to cultivate and appreciate the reading habit. It is indeed a part of the instruction of the adults to see to it that they continue to read. As the Adult Education Movement gathers strength and as the adults cultivate the habit of reading, the pressure on the funds for the production of such literature will diminish. For, it is certain that the time will come, sooner or later, when the adults will spend as willingly on books as they do now on their tobacco or tea. But in the beginning the expenditure on the production of suitable literature must be undertaken by organizations State-managed or State-aided. It will not do to entrust the work to unaided or unguided private agencies.

While the need of producing suitable literature is undoubted, its production is no easy task. In the first place very little such literature is at present extant and those entrusted with its production will, therefore, have little guidance. Moreover, it should be remembered that it has to cater to the needs of the lower strata of society and as such it must be related to the sentiments, feelings, desires and aspirations of their daily life and needs. The task

becomes all the more difficult when it is remembered that owing to the great gulf which separates the masses from the classes, and the villagers from the city-dwellers, it will be difficult for authors writing for one group to interpret truly the needs of the other. Whatever the difficulties, the production of such literature is so essential to the progress of adult education, that the State must stint no effort or expense to commandeer the best brains in the country in order that suitable literature may be produced.

In this connection the following extract relating to the Dutch East Indies may be of interest: "Connected with the continuation schools are the popular libraries which contain books not only for children but for adults.... The books are supplied by the Government Bureau of Popular Literature..... These libraries are regarded as an essential element of the whole educational system. They are enjoying a growing popularity. From a most modest beginning in 1908 the Bureau of Popular Literature has developed into a great institution which works miracles with a moderate budget". (*Vide* page 167.)

It is worthy of note that in the Dutch East Indies the Dutch rulers started the new system of primary schools and the Government Bureau of Popular Literature simultaneously, the latter supplementing the former in a most effective manner.

Another aspect of the question of adult education is the teaching staff to be employed. For obvious reasons such staff will have to be part-time only. It would be neither feasible nor desirable to recruit rank outsiders for such work. Undoubtedly, therefore, the primary agency for this would be that great body of active workers in the cause of education, *viz.*, the teachers. It would, however, be putting too great a premium on their generosity and desire of service to call upon the teachers to do this work without any extra remuneration.

Assuming that teachers are to be called upon to shoulder this responsibility, it must be remembered that not all of

them can be entrusted with the work and that a conscious selection would be desirable and necessary. Certain mental equipment is necessary for a successful teacher of adults.

The teachers cannot, however, proceed straight to teach the adults on the same lines as they teach the school children. There is a world of difference between the approaches to the two kinds of teachings. The training of teachers in this new work is a task which can best be done while the teachers are under training. In future it will form an important part of the work of the training colleges. In the meantime, some sort of arrangement will have to be made to give some directions to the teachers who will take up the new work.

Along with the teaching profession, it will be desirable and necessary to press into the service of the new movement, men and women who may not be teachers and yet are fitted to do the work of teaching the illiterate adults. The system should be sufficiently elastic so as to offer scope for work to such individuals. The services rendered by such persons will invigorate the movement bringing in a new spirit which will help to counteract the dead-weight of routine which is unavoidable in any system.

Assuming that the need of adult education is realised by the State and the necessary facilities provided, will the masses respond to the call? Will they attend the adult schools regularly during the minimum time required for the acquisition of literacy? Here there is no previous experience to guide us, because, as explained already, no systematic efforts have been made so far in the field of adult education. As regards the question of regularity of attendance on the part of the adults or even of their willingness to take the advantage of the facilities given to them, its solution necessarily lies in creating an atmosphere which is conducive to the healthy growth of the movement. The masses must be made 'literacy-minded' by a nationwide campaign wherein all forces that are working in the land for the betterment of the people must join hands in one supreme effort. A whirlwind campaign condemning illiteracy must be carried on amongst all sections of the

community. Unfortunately, it is as much necessary to educate the educated as to the conditions of illiteracy in India as it is to acquaint the illiterates with the desirability of acquiring literacy.

In Soviet Russia, where illiteracy has been all but wiped out during a course of twenty years, they succeeded in doing so, because they were able to create an atmosphere where illiteracy came to be looked upon as a great national evil. Speaking about Russia and its campaign against illiteracy Mr. Counts of the Columbia University says: "A psychological ferment has been started that already has profoundly disturbed and transformed the mentality of a population of one hundred and sixty millions. People have been taught to read; men and women have been told to hope; ideas have been disseminated on an unprecedented scale; forces have been released that can never be controlled".<sup>1</sup>

It is true that Russian methods cannot be imitated in India; but even if a fraction of the 'psychological ferment' that Russia was able to start into the mass mind is made available to the Indian masses, substantial results will follow.

The ferment could be more easily started among the masses in cities and towns than among the village people, because the attainment of literacy has some definite and immediate social and economic value in cities and towns. Teachers of the right sort are easily available and the gathering of the illiterates for the purpose of instruction is not difficult of achievement. Cities and towns are, therefore, the most suitable fields for beginning an attack on illiteracy through adult education. This does not mean that the village dwellers should not be tackled until the townfolk are touched. The problem of villages is the most important, because India is a land of villages. All that is suggested is that a beginning might be made in the cities and the experience so acquired may later on be used in dealing with the village people.

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<sup>1</sup> Modern Review, April, 1935, p. 494.

Such schemes of adult education as have been tried in India have shown that irregularity of attendance is almost proverbial amongst the adults attending the adult classes. This is mainly due, however, to the want of proper methods and material used for adult instruction. The adult student, when he attends a class in the evening or at night, is, in most cases, particularly in cities, a tired person. He has put in a full day's work. He must have some recreation just to set his mental faculties ready to apply themselves to the dry and dull task of mastering letters. It is, therefore, necessary to intersperse the formal instruction in reading with activities which will recreate him and at the same time instruct him. Forms of such recreative and educative activities have to be chosen and used with discretion. What these activities should be, experience alone will tell.

Even so, however, the adults will continue to be irregular to some extent in attendance. But this will have to be tolerated until public pressure would make it necessary for the adults to acquire literacy. Why do children go to school? Not because they like the school. They must go to school or else they will receive a wholesale condemnation from every one they meet. It is the force of long-established traditions that keeps the average youngster at school. Until such traditions are established, all that can be done is to make the adult school as attractive and interesting to the adults as possible. To treat the adult sympathetically and even with respect will prove of great help in attracting him. Encourage him at every step, tell him how easy it is to learn, give him a word of praise, and the adult will be quite willing to continue his education.

Should adult education be made compulsory? Mr. K. N. Kini in his Report on the Educational Survey of Mysore has made out an excellent case for Compulsory Adult Instruction. This is a consummation much to be desired, for, if it were possible, the pace of literacy in the country will be accelerated ten-fold or even more. So far as the promotion of literacy is concerned, Mr. Kini significantly points out: "The most formidable impediment against the spread of literacy is the enormous illiteracy of large masses of adult population. Our efforts to check retarda-

tion, elimination and wastage in the primary classes will bear fruit only if measures are undertaken to impart a minimum amount of literacy to the adult population, male as well as female, as much as would enable them to read vernacular newspapers and magazines and take lively interest in the affairs of the nation. When parents themselves possess the advantage of education, it is highly probable, nay even certain, that they would themselves without any external stimuli send their children to school in no inconsiderable numbers".<sup>1</sup>

In a country which has chosen democracy as its goal, an intelligent interest in its affairs by the adult population is essential. A child if he becomes literate at the age of, say 10, has to wait for another ten years till he is able to take active part in the affairs of the State; while a literate adult immediately steps in to contribute his quota to the Government of the country and the life of the community in which he lives. This difference alone is enough to interest a democratically constituted State to take immediate and extensive measures for the promotion of adult education, apart from other considerations.

<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 159.



## CHAPTER XIX

### CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters the various aspects of the problem of literacy in India have been dealt with in considerable detail. It is unnecessary, therefore, to restate the conclusions reached. The pivotal problem, on which the whole of the discussion in this book hinges, is to examine the causes of the very slow growth of literacy in India and to make suggestions for the acceleration of its pace. The history of a century shows that the percentage of literacy in this country has risen from 6 to 8 in a hundred years.<sup>1</sup> These figures, by themselves, would damp the ardour of the most zealous reformist.

One important reason of the low percentage of literacy recorded in India is, as has already been stated (Chapter I), that the literacy standard adopted today by the Census authorities is much higher. Owing largely to this, the percentage today comes to only 8 ; but if it is estimated on the basis adopted in many countries of the world, it would be at least twice as much. Even so, however, the position would appear to be most unsatisfactory, because in modern times an educationally C3 nation can never aspire to be a politically A1 nation. In this connection it is worthy of note that Russia removed the blot of illiteracy within about two decades and the Philippines have attained 50 per cent. literacy within the space of a generation. So backward a country as China is reported to have more than 20 per cent. literates. Unlike India, these countries, in adopting a standard of literacy, have been less ambitious but have proceeded on the basis that progress is possible only if it contains within itself the seeds of its own momentum. These nations are taking pride in their achievements and are cheerfully proceeding along the path of progress. In India, on the other hand, the outlook is one of unrelieved

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<sup>1</sup> Mass Education in India—Parulekar, p. 4.

gloom which is deepened by the results of the decennial Censuses which show little or no progress at all.

It is not suggested that India should lower her literacy ideal. She may adopt a stricter definition as a goal to be reached. But to prevent misconception of the literacy attainments of India among the nations of the world, an estimate of literacy based upon the common world definition should be made in India along with that of the other type of literacy now prescribed for Census purposes. Not only will such enumeration help India to take her rightful place among the nations of the world in point of literacy, but it will also help to remove to some extent the prevailing pessimism.

The low percentages of literacy recorded by the population Censuses is attributable to yet another cause which is that the high birth and death rates prevailing in this country take away nearly three-fourths (*vide* page 17) of the literate products of the schools, leaving only one-fourth to add to the actual increase in the percentage of literacy from decade to decade. In dealing with the Indian literacy problem and in assessing its results, this fundamental fact is often ignored and conclusions are drawn belittling the results of the educational system of the country. This attitude, as is obvious, is unscientific because comparisons are only possible between strictly comparable facts. Therefore, if the educational attainments of India in mass education are to be compared with those of other countries, the countries to be selected for purposes of comparison should have a social and economic background similar to that of India.

A well-planned system of instruction of the adult illiterates is a powerful means of increasing mass literacy. This problem has been all but ignored hitherto in this country.

Despite extenuating circumstances, however, the fact remains that the percentage of literacy in India is very low and that its growth has been alarmingly tardy. The most

potent cause of this halting progress is the smallness of the number of pupils under instruction in schools. A study of the educational statistics of other countries shows that soon after their deciding to launch upon a programme of mass education, the numbers in schools have swollen to a remarkable extent. In India, on the other hand, at no time has this occurred. It should be remembered that in any scheme of mass education, education must 'pour and not trickle'. The key to a rapid expansion of mass education in India lies in increasing the numbers under instruction in schools as quickly as possible.

It is possible that, among other things, the slow expansion of education in India is due to her inability to find the necessary funds, and there is no doubt that unless India finds the requisite funds she may not be in a position to meet the fullest demands of mass education. Formidable as this difficulty is, it would not be wise to sit with folded hands and do nothing until funds are available. If our belief in attaining mass literacy is as sincere as it has been vocal, an attempt must be made to devise ways and means to achieve expansion within the available resources.

So far, no serious effort was made to achieve mass literacy, firstly because of the difficulty of finance, but mainly because of a lack of missionary zeal on the part of the administrators of education to achieve this object. The alien character of the government of the country was the main impediment to progress. It is common knowledge that the British administrators of Indian education have from the earliest times emphasised quality as against quantity, and in their misconceived enthusiasm they have steadily and successfully resisted all efforts at expansion when the slightest lowering of quality was suspected. They did not consider the other view, *viz.*, that quality is only a relative term and must have its roots in the life and needs of a community. Besides, in dealing with Indian education, the insular character of the British has always come in the way of their seeking guidance from any other country but Britain and that too modern Britain.

The reform of the Indian educational system with a view to mass literacy within the present financial resources

may here be briefly considered. Any student of education is first of all struck by the smallness of the number of pupils entrusted per teacher in Indian schools. India seems to have maintained for more than three-quarters of a century an average number of pupils per teacher at about 25. This number is perhaps the lowest in the world. This apparent extravagance has been indulged in in the name of 'quality'. If expansion is therefore to be achieved the first step to be taken would be to increase the number of pupils per teacher.

In Chapter XV the part-time system of instruction adopted in various countries of the world and the success achieved through it by some of the agricultural countries have been described in some detail. This system in its various forms, including what is called the 'shift system' has hardly ever been a part and parcel of the Indian educational system. Its adoption will greatly add to the number of pupils under instruction without a proportionate increase in the cost. Here then is a great opportunity for bringing about rapid expansion which must be seized and utilized, if we are in earnest about mass education.

A striking feature of the Indian educational system is the very large proportion of pupils who fail and thus have to repeat the same class twice or even longer. On an average, the Indian primary schools annually fail more than 50 per cent. of their pupils. This has been going on almost from the inception of the system of education in India under the British rule. The percentage of failures is unparalleled in the educational history of the world. This appalling rate of failures has resulted in checking the growth of literacy to a very considerable extent. Children who have spent three or more years in school have to leave it without attaining literacy, because the administration would not permit their promotion to a higher class in the name of quality.

This brings us to the problem of the 1st year class in which the percentage of detentions is the largest. This class has been the stumbling block of young children in

their school career and has thus given a great set-back to the progress of literacy through the agency of schools. Improvement in the system of admissions to this class and promotions to the next, on the lines suggested in the foregoing pages, will greatly promote mass literacy.

One of the chief defects of the Indian educational system is that its administrative problems do not receive adequate attention. The Universities from which guidance in such matters is expected have no departments for such study; nor are there any other agencies imparting such knowledge. To achieve progress it is necessary for the leaders of Indian educational administration to acquire a critical knowledge of the organization of their own administration as also of foreign countries, particularly of such as are akin to India in their social and economic needs. In this respect critical field surveys of districts or even of smaller units would enable educational administrators to arrive at correct views on the various problems relating to Indian education and its methods and practices.

Of all the evils which afflict the Indian system of education perhaps the worst has been the tutelage of its teaching and administrative staffs. This has had a two-fold effect. Firstly, the teachers have not been able to give their best, and secondly, the administrative staffs working under the surveillance of the departmental heads have found it impossible to depart from routine and take initiative to explore fresh avenues of reform. This has been the fault of the system rather than of individuals, because the fear of expressing views which may go counter to those of persons in authority has helped to stifle all initiative. Unless the system is so changed that this spirit of apathy and implicit acquiescence yields place to one of fearless enquiry and expression, there is little hope for the future of Indian education.

An almost impassioned plea has been raised in these pages for the organization of a nation-wide drive for the early liquidation of mass illiteracy in the hope and belief that literacy would add to the moral and material welfare of the Indian people. The study of history tells us that

every nation, the moment it aspired to raise its status in the eyes of the world, has, as the first urgent measure, attempted to remove illiteracy and that its progress has synchronized with the liquidation of illiteracy. It is arguable, of course, that this may not happen in our unhappy land. But, "if water chokes, what shall we drink?"

## APPENDIX A

### The System of Primary Education in the Dutch East Indies

The system of primary education in the Dutch East Indies for the benefit of the natives of the islands is based upon the following three kinds of schools :

(1) *The Village School of Three Grades.* The Government and the village community co-operate in maintaining the school, the latter supplying the school building and the former paying the teachers' salaries.

(2) *The Continuation School.* Pupils who have finished the village school course of three grades can go on to the continuation school which teaches the 4th to the 6th grades. These schools are provided wherever there is a sufficient number of pupils. In some cases such a school has the 4th and 5th grades only.

(3) *The Complete Vernacular School.* This school has all the first three grades of a village school and, in addition, it teaches the 4th and 5th grades or all the three upper grades, 4th, 5th and 6th, according to the requirements of the locality.

From the above arrangement of the three types of schools and the grades or classes taught in them, it is clear that the ideal is to attain universal elementary education of six grades. But the ideal is deliberately kept aside for the present, considering the practical aspects of the question, especially the financial one.

A former Head of the Department of Education says :

"The present organization of vernacular education cannot be looked upon as more than a modest beginning, especially in regard to the quality of instruction. When in the early part of this century (1907) the Government set itself the task of founding in a much larger way elementary schools for the population, the type of school then existing appeared to be too expensive for wide extension. A complete equipment with that sort of school would have cost at least as much as the whole amount of the budget of those days. It may be expected that, with increasing prosperity of the population, the number of standard schools (complete vernacular schools mentioned as type 3 above) in proportion to the village schools will rise until finally the two types will have grown together

into a normal primary school of 8 classes. Undoubtedly this process will take much time, but there is no other possible way, within the bounds of the country's financial capacity, of arriving at a normal educational organization."<sup>1</sup>

"Owing to the financial and economic situation, at the start, no higher object could be proposed than reduction of illiteracy; now this object in itself is of high value, if it were only because illiteracy forms an obstacle to the full effect of measures for the peoples' welfare. Besides, it is a matter of social value that young people should, during some years, have to adapt themselves to a good school discipline."<sup>2</sup>

Some of the features of the internal organization of the village school may be noted :

(1) *The Curriculum.* In these village schools the instruction is very elementary, consisting only of reading, writing and arithmetic and a little physics and biology as far as it can be applied to the pupil's daily life. It should be particularly noted that in arithmetic the three years' course of instruction is confined to the simple rules and ciphering not further than 1000. "The chief task of these schools is to combat illiteracy."<sup>3</sup>

(2) *Hours of Instruction.* "School hours are divided in such a way that the first half of the day is assigned to the first class and the second to the second class and the third together, one school master sometimes aided by an assistant can do the whole teaching."<sup>4</sup> The school meets from 7-30 A.M. to 1 P.M. There are no afternoon classes because of the tropical climate. The first grade enters the building at 7-30 A.M. and stays until 10 A.M. The second grade enters at 10 A.M. and leaves at 1 P.M. and the third remains from 7-30 A.M. until 1 P.M.

"The advantages of this organization are, first: the teachers do not have to divide their attention among too many grades; second: that pupils of the first and second grades are not overburdened; third: that the parents can still use their children for home duties; fourth: that because of the density of the population, transportation offers no difficulties; fifth: that even in case of one-teacher school a decent standard of education is guaranteed."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Asiatic Review, 1934, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1925, p. 240.

<sup>4</sup> The Asiatic Review, 1934, p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1937, pp. 99-100.



(3) *Pupils per Teacher.* In 1935, in the village schools of three grades, there were 15,18,700 pupils taught by 30,737 teachers, thus giving on an average 49.4 or say 50 pupils per teacher.

(4) *Teachers and their Supervision.* It appears that for the village schools the teachers are trained in a normal course of 2 years' duration, the candidates joining the course after the completion of a 5-year course of the vernacular school.

"As far as possible the teacher is chosen from the district, preferably even from the very village in which the school is located. There he can live in his surroundings, in his house, on or near his own plot of land. He knows the people and he will easily inspire confidence in the school. Care is taken that the standard of living of the teacher does not differ too much from the average of the other villagers. Their salaries are therefore determined by local standards."<sup>1</sup>

The supervision over these schools seems to be strict as one supervisor is given to look after 50 village schools.

(5) *Admission to Schools.* Admission to schools is only allowed during the first month after the beginning of the course unless a pupil is transferred from another school. Children above the age of 8 years who have not yet attended another school are not admitted. The school meets for 10 months, there being two vacations of a month each.

(6) *Free and Compulsory Education.* The education given in these village schools is neither free nor compulsory. Apart from the very poor, everybody is expected to contribute a small fee. "This condition is a matter of principle, as experience has shown that people appreciate only things for which they pay."<sup>2</sup>

"Compulsion has not yet been introduced, first because it is not regarded as a sensible procedure to put compulsion in the law and not to enforce it (as it is done in the most of the Southern States of the United States and in some other countries), and second because the population would not understand the use of it and would resent it as an encroachment on the social and economic order. In Holland itself education was not made compulsory until there was practically universal education."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1937, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

(7) *A Special Feature.* "All native schools of any size are provided with a popular library by the Bureau of Popular Literature in the chief language of the district in which the school is located."<sup>1</sup>

It appears that this work is more systematically carried on in connection with the continuation schools.

"Connected with the continuation schools are the popular libraries which contain books not only for children but for adults. Apart from the classics of Javanese literature and novels translated from European languages, there are popular manuals written in the vernacular or Malay on hygiene, agriculture, animal husbandry, and other useful subjects. The books are supplied by the Government Bureau of Popular Literature which also publishes literature in the vernacular giving information on what is happening in the world, on scientific discoveries, on the discussion in Parliament, on common diseases and so on. These libraries are regarded as an essential element of the whole educational system. They are enjoying a growing popularity. From a modest beginning in 1908 the Bureau of Popular Literature has developed into a great institution which works miracles with a moderate budget."<sup>2</sup>

"The work of popular education is supported by an organization for providing popular reading matter. Properly speaking, this is no doubt a matter for private enterprise. But failing that, the Government itself has assumed this task also, since only half the work is done unless the population learning to read can find proper reading matter."<sup>3</sup>

(8) *Statistical Information.*

(i) Population and pupils :

Year	Population (in lakhs)	Pupils in vernacular schools (in lakhs)	Percentage
1912	450	6.2	1.4
1920	473	7.5	1.6
1930	581	14.8	2.6
1935	639	17.9	2.8

<sup>1</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1925, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1937, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> The Asiatic Review, 1934, p. 123.

## (ii) Pupils classified according to classes (1935) :

Class	Pupils (000)	Percentage
1st Year	680	38.0
2nd Year	507	28.4
3rd Year	386	21.6
4th Year	116	6.6
5th Year	89	5.4
6th Year	8	
Total	1786	100.0

## (iii) Promotions (1935) :

	Pupils on roll (000)	Promoted pupils (000)	Percentage
Class I to Class II	680	494	73
Class II to Class III	507	403	80

From	Number of pupils before promotion (000)	Pupils promoted or graduated (000)	Percentage
Village schools	1519	1173	77.2
Continuation schools	187	164	88.2
Complete vernacular schools	81	70	86.4
Total	1787	1407	80

On the question as to why in the Dutch East Indies a three-year course is considered adequate for the 'foundation school', a high Dutch official says :

"Several questions have been raised in connection with this form of elementary education. Some people have doubted whether a *Grundschule* of three grades can be regarded as sufficient. The answer is that school statistics

in the Dutch East Indies, in Indo-China, in British India, in Siam, in the Philippine Islands, in the rural districts of France, Italy, and the United States (especially in the Southern States and South Western States) show that the majority of the rural students do not go further than the third grade . . . . . The system in the Dutch East Indies is based on this fact. Since the number of continuation schools is increased according to the number of students available, the system is in no way a barrier to further education."<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen from the above statement that the establishment of a three-year foundation school (village school) is based upon social and economic conditions of the people for whom the system is meant to give a modest education befitting their needs. No attempt is made to force things and pitch them to a high level which may be far above the sustaining power of the people themselves. The system has, therefore, been very helpful in fighting illiteracy amongst the masses.

In connection with the progress of literacy the following observations are worth quoting :

"Illiteracy.—The statistics of illiteracy, however, are still very high because the educational system is recent and the older generation which never went to school has not yet died out. As it passes away, the figures of literacy will improve by leaps. Moreover, the statistics of illiteracy of the Dutch East Indies cannot be used for comparison with those of many other countries where one is usually classified as literate as soon as the question of the Census officer "Are you able to read and write your own name" is answered in the affirmative. In the East Indies a man must give evidence of his ability which makes a not unimportant difference . . . . . Between 1920 and 1930 literacy figures improved 228 per cent."<sup>2</sup>

The robust optimism prevailing in the Dutch East Indies regarding the efficiency of the system is well expressed by the following words of a high educational officer :

"Although this system of education might seem a rather slow one, the progress made in the last twenty-five years and the steady improvement in the percentage of attendance show that it is gratifyingly sure."<sup>3</sup>

It will be of interest to know what they are doing in the French Indo-China regarding Mass Education. A

<sup>1</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1935, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1937, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

few details which are available will show that the French and the Dutch are following practically the same lines for the educational uplift of the masses whose destiny they are controlling in their eastern possessions.

"On the first level are the schools for the masses . . . . . The course provided in these schools covers a three-year period. If this limitation of the elementary programme to three years is to be understood, it must first be realised that the vast majority of the children cannot really devote more than three years to school . . . . . Thus three years of schooling appears to be sufficient for the masses and a period of this length represents an enormous progress for the hordes who had been intellectually neglected before the beginning of French Colonization."<sup>1</sup>

The age of admission to schools is fixed at 7. Compulsion was introduced in only one part of the country in 1927. It is confined to "at least three years and for children between the ages eight to thirteen".

A French officer writes about the Indo-China system of mass education :

"The results have completely fulfilled our hopes and, although the time has not yet been long to bring them to their normal and total completion, they are astonishing enough to all those who have taken trouble to examine and understand them."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Columbia University Education Year Book, 1931, p. 508.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 514.

## APPENDIX B

### Death-rate among the Literates in India

According to the Life Table given in the Census Report of 1931, India, Vol. I, Part I (p. 173) it is found that, in India, in the case of males, if there are 60,161 children of age 5, their number after 10 years, *i.e.*, at age 15, dwindles by deaths to 54,112. This means that the death-rate for males aged 5 years for a period of 10 years is 10.05  $\left( \frac{60161 - 54112}{60161} \times 100 \right)$  per cent.

Calculating from the same Life Table similar death-rate for a period of 10 years for children who are aged 10, *i.e.*, till they reach the age of 20, it is found to be 9.32  $\left( \frac{56467 - 51203}{56467} \times 100 \right)$  per cent.

In order to find out the death-rate for 10 years amongst the group aged 5 to 10 years, it is necessary to take the average of the death-rates for ages 5 and 10, which are, as previously ascertained, 10.05 and 9.32 respectively. The average of these two figures is 9.69  $\left( \frac{10.05 + 9.32}{2} \right)$  or 9.7.

Similar calculations based on the figures given in the Life Table yield 10.5 as death-rate for the age group 10 to 15 and 13 for the age-group 15 to 20.

The number of literates of ages 20 and over are not given in the Census Reports in separate age-groups, but are given in the age-group '20 and over'. Hence, the death-rate for a period of 10 years for this age-group has to be ascertained by another set of figures in the Life Table. From the same Life Table (Column 6) it is seen that if there are 15,13,935 males living above age 20, the number of those living above the age of 30 will be 10,36,776. The death-rate for a decade, therefore, in the case of males of ages '20 and over' will come to 31.52  $\left( \frac{477159}{1513935} \times 100 \right)$  or say 31.5.

Applying these death-rates to the male literates for all India (including Indian States and Burma), as recorded in the Census Report of 1921, India, Vol. I, Part II (p. 72), it is found that the death-rate for the decade 1921 to 1931 for all male literates comes to 25.8 per cent. The calculations made are shown in the following table :

Age-group	Literates in 1921	Death-rate per cent. for the decade 1921-1931	Deaths
*5-10	9,39,000	9.7	91,083
10-15	26,84,000	10.5	2,81,820
15-20	28,26,000	13.0	3,67,380
20 & over	1,61,65,000	31.5	50,91,975
Total	2,26,14,000†	25.8	58,32,258

Similar calculations based on the Life Table—All India males (p. 174 of the Census Report of 1931, Vol. I, Part II) and on the number of female literates recorded in 1921 (Census Report, India, Vol. I, Part II, page 73), show that the death-rate among literate females of all groups taken together for the decade 1921-31, comes to 25.5 per cent. The relevant figures are given in the following table :

Age-group	Female literates in 1921	Death-rate per cent. for the decade 1921-1931	Deaths
5-10	2,39,000	10.3	24,617
10-15	4,64,000	13.3	61,712
15-20	4,52,000	17.4	78,648
20 & over	16,28,000	33.5	5,45,380
Total	27,83,000	25.5	7,10,357

As the number of female literates in India is about 12 per cent. of the total literates—males and females—the male death-rate which is 25.8 may be safely taken as the standard death-rate.

In adopting a death-rate for literates of all ages one factor has to be taken into account. The Life Tables on which calculations are based give figures for all males and females, irrespective of their literacy attainments. An opinion is, however, expressed in some quarters that the death-rate among the literates must be somewhat less than among the illiterates. This assumption, it appears, is based on the supposition that generally the economic condition

\* In the figures given in the Census Report this age-group is shown as 0-10. But as children below 5 are not counted in literacy figures, the group really represents ages 5 to 10.

† Number of literates of unspecified ages is omitted from these figures.

of literates is better than that of the illiterates and, therefore, literates are subjected to the risk of death to a lesser extent than illiterates. Whether the economic superiority of literates can make an appreciable difference in their mortality rate is a question which is open to doubt on several grounds. And yet, to err on the safe side, an allowance of 10 per cent. may be made to account for this difference in the conditions of living. Instead of 25.8 the death-rate for literates of all ages, males and females, may, therefore, be reduced by about 10 per cent. and taken at 23 for general calculations.

#### **Death-rate among New Literates**

It may be assumed that a boy would attain literacy between the ages 9 and 12. The death-rate for this age-group (9-12) for nine years is 9.5 (males). The earliest batch of new literates produced during the decade will have a risk of death for nine years, say, from 1922 to 1931, and the last batch in the decade, say, that of 1931, will have no risk of death as they will be counted in the Census the very year. The average death-rate will, therefore, for all new literates during nine years come to nearly half the average for nine years, *i.e.*, to 4.8 or say 5 per cent.



## APPENDIX C

### A Note on the Attempts at Correlation of the Census and Educational Statistics made by some Writers

(1) Extract from the Progress of Education in India, 1922-27, Vol. I, page 124 :

" 204.—It is interesting to discover what progress was made during the period 1911-1921. The census for 1911 shows the number of literates for that year as about 154 lakhs, while the similar figure for 1921 is 187 lakhs; thus the number of literates increased by about 33 lakhs in ten years, or at an average rate of 3.3 lakhs per year. To check this figure let us take the middle year of the decade under consideration, namely, 1916-17; it is found that some 4.1 lakhs of pupils completed their fourth year primary course; allowing a margin of 0.2 lakhs for failure to complete the course with such satisfaction as to render them literate, it is clear that about 3.9 lakhs may be considered to have become permanently literate, a figure which agrees sufficiently accurately with the figure 3.3 lakhs mentioned above to allow us to presume that literacy is attained only after about 4 years' effective schooling."

The following points should be noted :

(i) No account is taken of deaths among the literates of 1921 and of the new literates during the decade 1921-31. According to the death-rates (*vide* pp. 171-3) the number of deaths would come to 37 lakhs and therefore the number of the new literates ought to go up to 70 lakhs and not to 33 lakhs as shown in the calculations.

(ii) The margin of 5 per cent. for failures is too small under any case.

(iii) A reference to the General Table X in the Progress of Education in India, 1916-17, Vol. II, page 57, will show that the figure 4.1 lakhs refers to the 5th year class and not to the 4th year class, although the figure is under the Roman figure IV.

(2) Extract from the Census of India Report, 1931, Vol. I (India), Part I, pp. 335-336 : " The Education Department consider that four years

Year	No. of Class IV pupils in British India
1922	6,35,604
1923	6,46,962
1924	6,72,412
1925	6,68,345
1926	7,10,895
1927	7,67,921
1928	8,03,155
1929	8,57,409
1930	8,99,619
1931	9,98,097
Total	76,60,419

at school is required to give permanent literacy, and that the number of literates turned out in any year can therefore be gauged by the number of pupils reading in Class IV in that year. The marginal figures give their numbers annually for the past decade, making a total of 76,60,419. Of these persons it is considered that at least 20% and, possibly, as much as 25% would be found unfit for promotion, that is to say they have not been rendered permanently literate, so that almost that portion of them may be

regarded as having already relapsed into illiteracy by 1931, resulting in a minimum estimate of 57,50,000 persons

	Total number of literates in India in 1921 and in 1931	
India	226,23,651	281,31,315
Provinces	186,54,541	227,27,571
States	39,69,110	54,03,744

rendered literate in British India during the decade. Now the actual increase in the number of literates in British India since 1921 is 40,73,030, a figure which is fairly comparable with the Education Department's estimate when allowance

has been made both for the decrease to be replaced among previous literates on account of their normal mortality during the decade and for casualties among the new literates themselves".

In these calculations the following points may be noted :

(i) The number assigned to deaths among the old and new literates is about 17 lakhs. According to the death-rates (*vide* pp. 171-3) the number would come to about 48 lakhs.

(ii) The percentage of 'unfit for promotion' is taken at 25. Taking into consideration the great number of 'repeaters' this figure seems to be low. It should be particularly noted that in the first Extract quoted above the same percentage is taken at 5, which is obviously very low.

(3) Extract from "Report on the Primary Education for Boys and Girls in U. P. (1934), p. 11 :

"Literacy of the type required is achieved in Class IV (i.e., the 5th year class in U. P.). It is not necessary to pass Class IV, but it is essential to be admitted to it. There has always been a consensus of opinion in this matter. Mr. Harrop in his report says :

It is uncontestable that unless a boy reaches Class IV he carries away nothing of lasting value.

In the Hartog Report we find (page 45) :

We think it justifiable to assume that, on the average, no child who has not completed a primary course of at least four years will become permanently literate.

"In support of these views there is the simple proof of the census record as below. In 1921 there were in the United Provinces 15,56,626 literate males. In 1931 there were 20,43,410 or an increase 4,86,784. The death-rate for these Provinces is 26 per mille per annum for adults. It follows that of the 15,56,626 literate males of 1921, 4,04,716 died during the decade. This loss was made good by the outturn from our schools as well as the increase of 4,86,784. The round figures are 9 lakhs or 90,000 per annum. The enrolment given in the quinquennial report for 1932 shows the enrolment of class IV as 92,000 which is close enough."

The following points are worth noting :

(i) In the beginning, only males are considered but later on the figure in the Educational Report is taken for males and females.

(ii) The figure of pupils in the IV (i.e., the 5th year) class in U. P. for 1932 is taken as the average annual figure for the decade 1922-31. The figure as taken is very much exaggerated. In fact, the average annual figure for the decade comes to about 69,000 and not 92,000 as taken in the calculations.

(iii) No account is taken of the 'repeaters' in the 5th year class.

It would be of interest to refer to the following reports where similar attempts are made to correlate Census and Educational figures :

(1) Census of India, 1921. Volume XVII. Baroda State, Part I, paras. 302 ff.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The peculiarity of the calculations made here is that the writer makes his calculations on the assumption that the completion of the 3rd year class gives literacy. In Baroda, up to the year 1924-25, there was no Infants class and hence the 'third standard' was the 3rd year class. The writer says: "The real test of literacy is the third standard examination. The yearly batches of children that pass this test and go up to the fourth standard are the annual contribution of the Educational Department to the literate class of the State".

- (2) Census of India, 1931. Volume XIX. Baroda State, Part I, paras. 327 ff.
- (3) Census of India, 1921. Volume XV. Punjab and Delhi, Part I, paras. 153-156.
- (4) Census of India, 1931. Volume XVII. Punjab, Part I, para 179.

## APPENDIX D (i)

Statement showing number of pupils on roll in each class during the ten years 1922 to 1931.

( The figures are in thousands )

Year	BRITISH INDIA (including Burma)					BURMA		
	First Year Class	Second Year Class	Third Year Class	Fourth Year Class	Fifth Year Class	Third Year Class	Fourth Year Class	Fifth Year Class
1921-22	3343	1556	924	635	377	41	25	14
1922-23	3992	1343	924	647	323	43	26	15
1923-24	4258	1380	982	672	360	45	27	16
1924-25	4671	1402	962	668	368	47	29	17
1925-26	4986	1544	1066	710	395	49	32	19
1926-27	5280	1638	1131	768	427	52	32	21
1927-28	5470	1858	1243	803	474	59	35	23
1928-29	5564	1884	1315	857	503	56	38	24
1929-30	5662	1952	1367	900	523	65	40	27
1930-31	5266	2125	1481	998	613	69	46	30
Total	48492	16682	11395	7658	4363	526	330	206

## APPENDIX D (ii)

Statement showing number of pupils on roll and number promoted from each of the first five classes during the years 1922 to 1931, Bombay Presidency.

(The figures are in thousands)

Year	First Year Class		Second Year Class		Third Year Class		Fourth Year Class		Fifth Year Class	
	Roll	Promoted	Roll	Promoted	Roll	Promoted	Roll	Promoted	Roll	Promoted
1921-22	304	(134)	142	76	123	57	94	43	70	32
1922-23	288	(127)	150	83	128	68	98	51	72	36
1923-24	287	(126)	157	85	132	70	104	56	83	38
1924-25	281	(123)	161	89	138	72	109	58	91	42
1925-26	307	134	175	96	143	78	115	64	94	47
1926-27	352	140	183	102	151	83	120	67	99	49
1927-28	372	177	183	120	156	99	122	81	99	57
1928-29	346	178	184	120	161	101	126	79	102	57
1929-30	398	160	189	119	162	96	129	78	105	56
1930-31	414	182	192	127	166	107	131	89	107	64
Total	3349	1481	1716	1017	1460	831	1148	666	922	478

N.B. — Figures in brackets are approximate.

## APPENDIX D (iii)

Statement showing number of pupils on roll in the 3rd year class and 4th year class in some of the Provinces in British India during the years 1922 to 1931.

(The figures are in thousands)

	Madras		Bombay		Bengal		U. P.		B & O.		C. P.		Punjab		Burma	
	III	IV	III	IV	III	IV	III	IV	III	IV	III	IV	III	IV	III	IV
1922	217	167	123	94	191	113	96	68	88	63	51	42	69	50	41	25
1923	232	177	128	98	214	89	98	71	95	72	51	43	75	57	43	26
1924	251	189	132	104	195	89	106	78	103	72	51	44	79	64	45	27
1925	270	201	138	109	185	90	115	83	107	72	53	46	86	67	47	29
1926	286	215	143	115	199	91	126	92	107	38	56	49	93	74	49	32
1927	305	230	151	120	199	96	139	101	125	46	61	50	96	83	52	32
1928	321	242	156	122	257	118	153	113	130	53	64	55	106	84	59	35
1929	339	256	161	126	274	127	166	120	133	55	67	59	118	90	56	38
1930	355	268	162	129	285	133	178	126	133	55	69	61	129	98	65	40
1931	367	280	166	131	275	117	177	128	134	52	71	50	135	107	69	46
Total	2943	2225	1460	1148	2274	1063	1354	930	1155	578	594	499	986	774	526	330

**APPENDIX D (iv)**  
**Statement showing Literacy Statistics of some Provinces & States.**

Name of Province or State	Population (000)			Literates (000)			Percentage		
	1911	1921	1931	1911	1921	1931	1911	1921	1931
Assam	6714	7606	9248	327	483	897	4.9	6.3	9.7
Bengal	45483	46696	50114	3522	4255	4694	7.7	9.0	9.4
B. & O.	34490	34002	37678	1419	1586	1704	4.1	4.7	4.5
Bombay	19673	19292	21808	1374	1646	2004	7.0	8.5	9.2
C. P. & Berar	13916	13913	15508	496	633	868	3.6	4.6	5.6
Madras	41405	42319	46740	3094	3622	4319	7.5	8.6	9.3
Punjab	19975	20685	23581	775	833	1248	3.9	4.3	5.3
U. P.	47185	45376	48409	1619	1689	2260	3.4	3.7	4.7
Baroda	2033	2127	2444	205	272	435	10.1	12.3	17.8
Gwalior	—	3186	3523	—	110	141	—	3.4	4.0
Hyderabad	13375	12472	14436	368	365	596	2.8	2.9	4.1
Kashmir	3104	3260	3646	65	72	124	2.1	2.2	3.4
Cochin	—	—	1205	—	—	339	—	—	28.1
Travancore	2952	4006	5096	513	967	1218	15.0	24.1	23.9
Mysore	580b	5979	6557	365	443	595	6.3	7.4	9.1



